

FEHD reminds operators of catering businesses to continue to comply with anti-epidemic regulations during long weekend

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 28) reminded operators of catering businesses that the Vaccine Pass requirement will enter the second stage from April 30 (Saturday). The relevant vaccination requirements are also applicable to the remaining period (i.e. April 30 to May 4) of the specified period of the prevailing directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Cap. 599F Regulation). Operators of catering businesses must stay vigilant during the coming long weekend and strictly comply with the requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Vaccine Pass) Regulation (Cap. 599L) and the Cap. 599F Regulation etc. Customers must also comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions, including the requirements on vaccination, group gatherings and the wearing of masks, in order to help the epidemic situation continue to subside and prevent a rebound.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The FEHD will continue to step up its inspections and conduct joint operations with the Police, so as to take stringent enforcement action against operators, staff and customers of catering businesses and certain scheduled premises who defy anti-epidemic regulations during the coming long weekend."

The spokesman reminded operators of catering businesses and the public that the second stage of the Vaccine Pass arrangements, except under exempted scenarios (e.g. for those issued with a COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Certificate (Medical Exemption Certificate), recovery record or for other specified scenarios), include the following requirements –

- (a) persons aged 18 or above are required to receive at least two doses of COVID-19 vaccine to continue to use the Vaccine Pass;
- (b) if persons aged 12 to 17 have received their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine for less than six months, their Vaccine Pass remains valid; however, if they have received their first dose for more than six months, they will need to receive a second dose to continue to use the Vaccine Pass.

In addition, catering businesses operators and members of the public must strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions. Among these, operators of catering businesses are required to use the "QR Code Verification Scanner" mobile app developed by the Government to scan the QR code of a customer's vaccination record or Medical Exemption Certificate or recovery record to ensure compliance with the active checking requirements. Operators must also ensure that the "QR Code Verification Scanner" mobile app

is the latest version (4.3.0 or above), to avoid giving rise to unnecessary problems (e.g. an incorrect audio alert will be generated as the app cannot verify a recovery record QR code, and the person concerned would be mistaken as not meeting the Vaccine Pass requirement). Operators of catering business should update the "QR Code Verification Scanner" directly. It is not advisable to uninstall the current version, and download and install the latest version, so as to avoid deleting the existing scanning records inadvertently.

"QR Code Verification Scanner" can be used to scan the QR code of vaccination record or Medical Exemption Certificate or recovery record displayed on "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app. If a customer does not store his or her relevant record on "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile app, but displays it through other means ("eHealth", "iAMSmart" mobile app or on paper), the operator may also scan that QR code with the "QR Code Verification Scanner" to check compliance with the Vaccine Pass requirement; however, that customer is still required to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code separately before being allowed to enter the premises.

The spokesman also reminded operators of catering business that they must provide specified form for use by exempted persons under the Vaccine Pass requirement and specified persons (e.g. people with a disability) under the "LeaveHomeSafe" requirement, and keep such record for 31 days. From May 1, all Medical Exemption Certificates must be issued electronically by doctors via the eHealth System or the Hospital Authority's computer system. Certificates without an encrypted QR code will not be accepted. The Government has uploaded the updated specified form applicable to May 1 or after onto the FEHD webpage.

On the other hand, the requirements of air change and/or air purifiers for catering premises have been implemented for one year. Catering premises which have yet to register via the designated FEHD webpage on compliance with a minimum of six air changes per hour or installation of air purifiers meeting the prescribed specifications are required, under the directions, to remain closed. They must first comply with the above requirements, complete such registration and obtain confirmation from the FEHD as valid before they are allowed to reopen their businesses.

Operators of catering business are also required to ensure that the ventilating system (outside air) approved under the licence is properly repaired and maintained so that the outside air supply consistently fulfils the approval requirements, and that the system, regardless of whether it meets the requirement of an air change per hour level of six, is fully switched on when the premises is open for business to ensure a proper supply of outside air. They must, after air purifiers have been installed at the premises, properly switch on, operate, maintain and repair the air purifiers in accordance with the manufacturer's manual when their premises are open for business.

During April, the FEHD and the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer have made a series of publicity and education efforts, including holding online meetings with the representatives of the catering

trade on April 19 and 27, and the FEHD has also, through advisory letters issued to operators of catering premises and liaison by frontline colleagues, reminded them to comply with the relevant requirements and directions. It is believed that the catering trade and the public should have get used to and adapted to the new arrangements.

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business contravenes the Cap. 599F Regulation or the requirements and directions of the Vaccine Pass, he or she is liable to be prosecuted and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who are present at catering premises or other specified premises must comply with directions applicable to them. Non-compliance with the relevant directions is an offence and offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$10,000. The liability may be discharged by paying a fixed penalty of \$5,000. In addition, for customers in breach of the requirement on the maximum number of persons per table within catering premises, they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). For customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking, they are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the spokesman strongly appealed to operators of catering business and members of the public to stay vigilant and comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner during the long Easter holidays. The FEHD will continue to maintain communication with the sector and strengthen its publicity efforts and enforcement actions. They are reminded to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.