

FEHD reminds various sectors to continue to comply with anti-epidemic regulations during long Easter holidays

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 13) reminded various sectors to stay vigilant during the long Easter holidays in order to help the epidemic situation continue to subside and prevent a rebound. Operators of catering businesses and scheduled premises must strictly comply with the requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), the Prevention and Control of Disease (Vaccine Pass) Regulation (Cap. 599L) and more. Customers must also comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions, including the requirements on vaccination, group gatherings and the wearing of masks.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to social distancing measures in catering businesses and scheduled premises under the Regulation have been extended till April 20 and the Vaccine Pass arrangements are implemented. 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 long Easter holidays."

The spokesman reminded the public that, under the Vaccine Pass arrangements, except under exempted scenarios (e.g. for those issued with a COVID-19 Vaccination Medical Exemption Certificate or for other specified scenarios), all persons aged 12 or above entering or remaining at any specified premises (including all catering premises, FEHD markets and hawker bazaars) must comply with the vaccination requirements.

In addition, premises operators and members of the public must strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions. Among these, members of the public (excluding persons who only order takeaway) are required to use the "LeaveHomeSafe" mobile application to scan the venue QR code before they enter catering premises or the FEHD's public markets, hawker bazaars and cooked food markets. To ensure compliance with the Vaccine Pass requirements, operators of catering businesses are required to use the latest version of the "QR Code Verification Scanner" mobile app developed by the Government to scan the QR code of a customer's vaccination record.

They 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 6, is fully switched on when the premises is open for business to ensure a proper supply of outside air. They are also required to register having reached the requirements of air change or installation of air purifiers that meet the specified specifications. 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.

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 premises are also required to display the posters containing the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code, notices applicable to premises subject to active checking of the Vaccine Pass and notices on air change per hour or air purifiers at the entrances of the premises or at conspicuous locations.

The FEHD also reminded operators of catering premises to make necessary preparations for the new round of social distancing measures to be introduced from April 21. To cope with a possible increase in the number of customers, operators of catering premises may consider taking the following steps at the entrance of the premises in a timely manner to enhance the efficiency of scanning the vaccination records of customers: (1) use of a rear camera that has stronger focusing performance if the front camera of the mobile device in use is not sensitive enough, and (2) as needed, setting up several mobile devices for customers to scan their vaccination records at the same time.

The FEHD has issued advisory letters to operators of catering premises to remind them to comply with the relevant requirements and directions. Details are set out in FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Advisory_Letter_CP_20220412.html).

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business contravenes the 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).

In addition, the FEHD will also conduct joint operations with several government departments during the long Easter holidays at popular places where foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) commonly gather, to carry out publicity and educational work, appealing to FDHs to raise awareness of epidemic prevention and comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions.

During the operations, apart from arranging for cleaning contractors to strengthen the street cleaning services at relevant spots, the FEHD will also step up patrols to combat unlicensed hawking activities. Promotional leaflets in multiple languages will also be distributed by the FEHD to appeal to FDHs to maintain environmental hygiene and refrain from conducting unlicensed hawking activities. FDHs will also be reminded by other government departments to comply with the regulations on mask wearing and the prohibition of gatherings in public places.

From January to April 10 this year, the FEHD participated in over 360 inter-departmental joint operations at public places where people including FDHs congregate during weekends and public holidays. A total of 74 fixed penalty notices were issued to persons who breached public cleanliness offences and caused obstruction in public places. In addition, seven persons were arrested and prosecuted for illegal hawking in public places; 92 seizures of hawker abandoned articles, including cooked food, weighing about 442 kilograms, were effected; and three prosecutions were taken against the operators of restaurants for breaching the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X).

On the other hand, in light of the epidemic developments, the FEHD markets will resume the closing time at 8pm. The FEHD has liaised with the sector of the relevant trade federation on the opening hours of markets and garnered its support and co-operation. Market management/cleaning service contractors will continue to conduct thorough cleaning in all markets, cooked food markets and cooked food centres after the venues are closed every day, while the FEHD will continue to step up regular cleaning and disinfection of communal areas and facilities in the markets, cooked food markets and cooked food centres, including toilets, escalators, elevators and stair handrails, with diluted household bleach regularly every day.

To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission, the spokesman strongly appealed to all sectors of the community 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. All sectors are reminded to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.