

FEHD responds to Ombudsman's direct investigation report

Regarding a report released by the Office of The Ombudsman today (March 7) on its direct investigation into the regulation of licensed swimming pools by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), a spokesman for the FEHD expressed gratitude and said that the department accepted all 12 recommendations made in the report and has responded to gradually implement a number of recommendations, including:

- improving health inspectors' compilation of inspection records and revising the inspection record form to delineate the inspection items more clearly so as to unify the standard of inspections. These improvement measures not only assist health inspectors in carrying out systematic inspections but also effectively enhance the quality of inspections. Licensees can also better understand the inspection results to follow up on irregularities;
- making good use of technologies to enhance the record maintenance of inspection results for licensed swimming pools. The FEHD is working on the enhancement of the Licensing Management Information System to electronically record the inspection results for licensed swimming pools and provide additional photo-taking functions. Relevant information and records will be transferred direct to the system for prompt analysis with a view to improving regulatory efficiency;
- to enhance monitoring by swimming pool users, the FEHD has imposed an additional licensing condition since October 2022, requiring licensees to display at a conspicuous location of pool entrances the required number of life-saving attendants during the opening hours of swimming pools. Apart from serving as a reminder to licensees and management staff, it also makes information more transparent to pool users and empowers them to take part in the monitoring of swimming pools by being aware of whether the number of life-saving attendants on duty is sufficient;
- to address the pool water quality issue, the FEHD has proactively enquired with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) to draw reference from the practice in public swimming pools and update the guidelines on the handling of pollution sources in swimming pool water, which is expected to be completed in the second quarter this year. The FEHD and the LCSD have already held the first meeting to exchange

information and share experiences on the regulation and management of swimming pools; and

- the FEHD will issue letters to licensees before the swimming season in order to encourage the licensees to enhance life-saving, first-aid and resuscitation equipment as necessary, including the provision of lifebuoys, first-aid boxes, suction devices, oxygen deployment equipment, automated external defibrillators, etc to further protect swimmers' safety.

The spokesman said, "The FEHD ensures licensed swimming pools' compliance with the Swimming Pools Regulation and licensing conditions through regular inspections and various regulatory measures to protect swimmers' safety and maintain environmental hygiene. The FEHD has been reviewing from time to time the workflow and guidelines for regulating licensed swimming pools, and the investigation report released by the Office of The Ombudsman will help the department further improve its work. Other than the above-mentioned new measures that are already implemented, the FEHD is continuing to actively follow up on the rest of the recommendations."