

## FEHD steps up inspections and joins inter-departmental joint operations around New Year to take stringent enforcement action relating to anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) continued to take stringent enforcement action relating to anti-epidemic regulations during the New Year period. The FEHD stepped up inspections in various districts and conducted joint operations with the Police in Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po yesterday (January 3). The Government reminded catering business and scheduled premises operators to 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), and customers patronising catering premises to comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions, including the requirements on group gatherings and wearing of masks.

A total of 55 catering premises were inspected during the joint operations, and 665 catering premises and 145 other premises were inspected by the FEHD on its own yesterday. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against nine catering business operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (relating to distance or partitioning between tables and mask wearing). The FEHD also issued one fixed penalty notice to a person for violating the mask-wearing requirement. In addition, the FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against one person suspected of operating food businesses without a licence in contravention of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X). Enforcement action was also taken by the Police during the joint operations.

During the past four days (December 31, 2020, to January 3), the FEHD (including in joint operations involving other departments) inspected a total of 3 522 catering premises and 561 other premises, and initiated procedures on prosecution against 40 catering business/other operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (including one providing dine-in services after 6pm). The FEHD also issued fixed penalty notices to two persons for violating the mask-wearing requirement, and initiated procedures on prosecution against three persons for breaching other Ordinances (one case for operating food businesses without a licence, one case for illegal extension of business area and one case causing obstruction in public places). In addition, during the joint operations for two days in the vicinity of Pei Ho Street Market and Cooked Food Market in Sham Shui Po, the FEHD issued a total of 10 verbal warnings to the relevant hawkers and the Police issued a total of 12 fixed penalty notices for illegal parking, and the two departments cleared a total of over 2.6 tonnes of paraphernalia on

the carriageway with the use of grab lorries. During the inspections in the northern New Territories, the FEHD found that two barbeque sites in North District were not in operation and the privately run facility involving admission of the public at Tai Tong in Yuen Long did not operate any places of public entertainment activities.

An FEHD spokesman said, "According to the current directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to social distancing measures in catering business and scheduled premises under the Regulation, catering business operators must strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions, which include requirements that a person responsible for carrying on a catering business must cease selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises of the business from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day; the number of people participating in a banquet in catering premises is limited to 20; no more than two persons may be seated together at one table within any catering premises, and the total number of customers allowed in catering premises must not exceed 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity; no live performance and dancing is allowed; a mask must be worn within the premises except when the person is consuming food or drink at a table therein; tables must be arranged in a way to ensure there is a distance of at least 1.5 metres or some form of partition which could serve as an effective buffer between one table and another table; body temperature screening must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises; and hand sanitisers must be provided. In addition, a person responsible for carrying on a catering business must display the poster containing the 'LeaveHomeSafe' venue QR code at the entrance of the premises or at a conspicuous location. Relevant scheduled premises operators must strictly comply with the direction on closure of scheduled premises, which include places of public entertainment."

If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business or scheduled premises contravenes the regulations under the Regulation, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Customers in breach of the requirement on no more than two persons per table within catering premises are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). Moreover, customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

The spokesman stressed that the FEHD will continue to step up law enforcement and publicity efforts and will deploy additional manpower to conduct joint operations with the Police. Stringent enforcement action will be taken against offenders to ensure compliance with relevant regulations. The FEHD also urged catering business and scheduled premises operators and the public to abide by the law.

The spokesman reminded catering business and scheduled premises operators and the public to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together. He also appealed to the operators concerned to comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner, with a view to keeping their staff, customers and the public safe. Members of the public also have to comply with the related regulations and directions on group gatherings and mask wearing at catering premises.