

FEHD steps up inspections and joins interdepartmental joint operations around Christmas to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has stepped up inspections and joined the joint operations with the Police and relevant departments during the Christmas period, to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations in all districts across the territory. Joint operations were conducted by the FEHD and the Police in Central & Western, Wan Chai, Yau Tsim, Mong Kok and Kwai Tsing District yesterday (December 24), and as circumstances required, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health, the Fire Services Department and the Buildings Department also joined the joint operations in Wan Chai and Yau Tsim. Together with the inspections conducted by the FEHD, the coverage of the enforcement actions covered all administrative districts across the territory. The Government reminds 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 108 catering premises and 4 other premises were inspected during the joint operations, and 593 catering premises and 13 other premises were inspected by the FEHD on its own yesterday. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 8 persons (7 catering business operators for breaching the requirements on distance or partitions between tables, mask-wearing, etc. and 1 scheduled premises operator for breaching the requirement on closure of places of public entertainment) under the Regulation. In addition, The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 4 persons (3 persons and 1 person suspected to be violating the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) for operating food businesses without a licence and the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance (Cap. 172) for operating a place of public entertainment without a licence respectively), including arresting 2 of the operators involved in food businesses. Furthermore, enforcement actions were taken by other departments during the joint operations.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to social distancing measures in catering business and scheduled premises under the Regulation has been extended till January 6, 2021. 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; and 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, 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, etc. 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 Cap. 599F, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

For customers in breach of the requirement on no more than two 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 Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G). Moreover, 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).

The spokesman said, "Under section 31(1) of the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X), except with a licence granted, no person shall carry on any food businesses like food factories or restaurants etc. Offenders are liable to be prosecuted, and upon conviction to a maximum fine at level 5 (\$50,000) and imprisonment for 6 months, and, for a continuing offence, a fine of \$900 for each day"

The spokesman continued, "Under section 4(1) of the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance (Cap. 172), without a licence granted, no person shall keep or use any place of public entertainment. Offenders are liable to be prosecuted, and upon conviction to a maximum fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for 6 months, and, for a continuing offence, a fine of \$2,000 for every day"

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 in the coming few days. Stringent enforcement actions will be taken against offenders to ensure compliance of

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 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.