

FEHD steps up inspections and takes stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) and the Police conducted joint operations in various districts across the territory on Saturday (December 12) and Sunday (December 13), to step up inspections at catering premises and private barbeque sites. Stringent enforcement actions were taken against offenders. The Government reminds catering business 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.

The FEHD and the Police inspected 452 catering premises during the joint operations, and the FEHD also inspected 1,701 catering premises on its own over the past two days. During the joint operations, the FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 13 catering business operators for breaching the requirements on distance or partitions between tables, mask-wearing, display of the poster containing the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code etc, under the Regulation. Starting from December 12, the FEHD has been initiating procedures on prosecution against catering business operators (involving three cases on December 12) for failure to display the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code properly.

Separately, the FEHD and the Police, in their joint operations on December 12, also covered the inspection of a total of six private barbeque sites in Tuen Mun District, North District, Yuen Long District and Tai Po District. During the joint operations, the FEHD issued verbal warnings to two operators of private barbeque sites during daytime, and did not find any of the barbeque sites inspected in operation after 6pm.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under Cap. 599F takes effect from December 10 to December 23, 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. Other requirements and restrictions on catering business will be maintained, including 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 which must be unobstructed at any one time so that it is readily accessible for scanning with a mobile phone by a person entering the catering premises and the size of the image of the poster displayed must not be less than 210 x 297 millimetres (A4 size)."

The spokesman stressed that the FEHD will continue to proactively take stringent enforcement actions, step up inspections at catering premises in various districts across the territory and conduct joint operations with the Police as needed, to ensure that catering business operators and the public strictly comply with relevant regulations so as to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in food premises.

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

With the Winter Solstice and Christmas approaching, the spokesman reminded catering business operators and the public to exercise self-discipline and cooperate to fight the virus together. He also appealed to catering business operators 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.