

FEHD steps up inspections at food premises and takes stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic measures

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (October 8) stepped up inspections at catering business premises in Tuen Mun District and Central and Western District. The FEHD conducted joint operations with the Police to step up inspections at catering business premises in Tuen Mun District and remind food business operators and food handlers to strictly comply with the relevant requirements under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), and the public to comply with the restriction in relation to group gatherings under the anti-epidemic regulations and directions when patronising restaurants.

During the operations in Tuen Mun District and Central and Western Districts today, the FEHD inspected some 30 catering business premises. During the joint operation with the Police in Tuen Mun District, the FEHD issued fixed penalty tickets to 19 persons found seated at two tables inside a VIP room of the catering business premises for violating the requirement of no more than four persons should be seated together at one table. The FEHD also initiated the procedure on prosecuting that catering business premises in Tuen Mun District and six catering business premises in a large shopping complex in Admiralty for violating the directions in relation to catering business. These are mainly about violating the requirements on the distance between tables, wearing a mask at all times within the premises except when consuming food or drink and the number of persons at one table.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "According to the directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business premises under the Regulation, food business operators and food handlers have to strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions. Among these, the number of customers at any premises must not exceed half of its normal seating capacity, no more than four persons may be seated together at one table at catering premises; a mask must be worn at all times within the premises, except when the person is consuming food or drink; body temperature screening must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises and hand sanitisers must be provided. According to the relevant anti-epidemic regulations and directions, members of the public also have to comply with the related restriction on group gatherings at catering business premises, that is no more than four persons may be seated at one table."

Under the Regulation, licensees and operators of food premises must strictly comply with the series of requirements and restrictions.

Contravening the requirements and restrictions is a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who violate the group gathering restriction of Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition in Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) are subject to a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

The spokesman said that the FEHD will continue to step up inspections at food premises across the territory and conduct joint operations with the Police to ensure that food business operators, food handlers and the public strictly comply with the directions under the regulation and will take enforcement actions against offenders so as to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in food premises.

The FEHD spokesman appealed to food business operators and food handlers to comply with the relevant Regulation on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner, with a view to keeping workers, customers and the public safe, and to members of the public to comply with the related regulations and directions relating to group gatherings at catering business premises.