

FEHD takes stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations and joins inter-departmental joint operations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) continued to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations. Apart from stepping up inspections in various districts in the past two days (March 27 and 28), joint operations with the Police were also conducted in Kowloon City, Kwai Tsing, Sai Kung and Wan Chai. Stringent enforcement actions were taken against offenders. The FEHD today (March 29) again reminded catering business operators to remain vigilant and strictly comply with the directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation).

A total of 106 catering premises were inspected during the joint operations, while 1088 catering premises and 250 other premises were inspected by the FEHD on its own in the past two days. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 14 catering business operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (among them, nine were related to failure to arrange all staff to undergo COVID-19 test once every 14 days, the remaining six were related to distance or partition between tables, the total number of customers allowed in catering premises exceeding 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity, mahjong activity and mask wearing. Among them, one operator were related to breaching the testing requirement and the mask wearing requirement at the same time). Since the relevant requirements or restrictions were not adopted, on the subsequent day of being identified by the enforcement agent, corresponding measures for reducing the risk of transmission (i.e. selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises must be ceased from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, and no more than two persons may be seated together at one table) had to be taken by the premises for periods of three days (1 case), seven (4 cases) and 14 days (9 cases).

According to the current directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering premises under the Regulation, if a person responsible for carrying on a catering business adopts a series of infection control measures, the premises can provide dine-in service until 9.59pm and no more than four persons may be seated together at one table. Some of the scheduled premises such as places of public entertainment may be open when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled. 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.

In addition, customers within catering premises in breach of the requirement on maximum number of persons seated together at one table are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) while customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking otherwise are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

To minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19, the spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators to comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner. He also reminded the operators concerned and members of the public to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.