

FEHD urges public to defer grave sweeping plans

In view of the current severe epidemic situation, a spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (April 4) appealed to members of the public to defer their grave sweeping plans. Doing so can lessen crowd conditions and reduce close contact, thereby reducing the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus through social contact.

The FEHD reminded grave sweepers to avoid group gatherings when grave sweeping, maintain an appropriate social distance with others at all times and avoid meal gatherings with relatives and friends at worship sites.

An FEHD spokesman said, "The Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) came into effect on March 29. The regulation prohibits group gatherings with more than four people in public places and grave sweeping is not exempted. Therefore, members of the public have to abide by the group gathering regulation by having not more than four people together during grave sweeping unless they are living in the same household. In addition, a distance of at least 1.5 metres should be maintained between grave sweeper groups."

For members of the public visiting cemeteries and columbaria to pay respects to ancestors, the spokesman reminded that they should seek medical advice promptly and refrain from going grave sweeping if they have fever or respiratory symptoms. Grave sweepers should maintain good personal hygiene, wear surgical masks and always keep their hands clean. They are also reminded to keep flammable items (e.g. alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based hand sanitisers) away from ignition sources, incense and candles, and furnaces for the sake of safety.

The spokesman stressed, "At this critical moment when the epidemic situation remains severe, members of the public should co-operate and work together to fight the virus. They should seriously consider postponing grave sweeping activities so as to prevent and protect themselves and their family members from infection, thereby preventing the spread of the virus in the community."

The FEHD appeals to members of the public to make use of the Internet Memorial Service webpage (www.memorial.gov.hk) or the related mobile application to pay tribute to deceased loved ones.