

Government and Working Group strive together with stakeholders to assist dine-in catering premises in improving air change or installing air purifiers

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to the catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, together with relevant government departments continued to proactively co-operate with stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors, and are committed to assisting them to smoothly implement the requirement, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises.

Further to a meeting with the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong on April 23, the Working Group together with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department held a webinar today (April 27) attended by stakeholders from the catering sector through the invitation of the Efficiency Office in support of the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee. Attendees exchanged views on matters of mutual concern candidly and would strive together to comply with relevant requirements. The Working Group has also uploaded to the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/question_air-changes_purification.html) a set of frequently-asked questions and answers to address issues of concerns raised by the trade and specialist contractors, and will later on upload video of the webinar following editing to the FEHD's webpage.

A Government spokesman reminded catering business operators that in order to comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, they are required to register with the FEHD on or before April 30 that the air change per hour at seating areas of their premises has reached at least six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). As at April 26, 2 995 catering premises have submitted online registrations and another 129 have submitted online declarations before March 18 through the voluntary declaration scheme. The FEHD is also constructing a thematic page to facilitate different stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors in browsing and searching relevant materials with a view to assisting them in completing the registration.

"Catering premises must submit an application of extension to the FEHD if they are unable to complete the registration on time. The application form can be downloaded from the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Application_for_extension_of_time_for_registration_on_air_change_installation_of_air_purifier_in_catering_premises.html) or by scanning the QR code in the attachment. After submitting the application, catering business operators must complete the registration within the deadline specified in the FEHD's reply. In the meantime, premises which have submitted such an application may observe the time limit applicable to the daily dine-in service and be subject to the cap on the number of persons that may be seated at one table etc. in accordance with the applicable directions prevailing at the time. The FEHD will handle separately cases which did not apply for extension or where their applications have been rejected or failed to follow up completing the registration within the extended time limit specified by the FEHD. During the initial stage of the implementation of the new requirement, the department will focus on publicity and education as well as providing advice, and will closely monitor the relevant situation and adjust the arrangements in due course," the spokesman said.

The spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators to fight the virus together, and strictly comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a persistent manner to protect personal and public health.