

Government announces tightening of testing and quarantine arrangement for exempted persons

The Government today (July 26) announced that crew change arrangement for passenger vessels and goods vessels without cargo operation in Hong Kong would be suspended with effect from July 29 (Wednesday). The testing and quarantine arrangement for sea crew members of goods vessels coming to Hong Kong for cargo operation, air crew members and other persons exempted from quarantine requirement (exempted persons) arriving Hong Kong will also be tightened.

The Government spokesman pointed out that the quarantine exemption arrangement under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) was essential for maintaining the necessary operation of society and the economy, and for ensuring an uninterrupted supply of all daily necessities to the public. The Government has been closely monitoring the risk and pressure on public health brought about by imported cases and adopting coping measures in a resolute manner.

With effect from July 29 (Wednesday), in accordance with the risk level of respective exemption categories, the Government will tighten the testing and quarantine arrangement for exempted persons as set out below –

Sea Crew of Passenger and Goods Vessels

- Suspend crew change arrangement for passenger vessels and goods vessels without cargo operation in Hong Kong until the local epidemic situation is contained.
- For goods vessels coming to Hong Kong for cargo operation, new exemption conditions will be imposed and the existing requirements will be tightened, including –
 - all crew members of these vessels should remain onboard the vessels during the stay of the vessels in Hong Kong waters and should not go ashore;
 - outgoing crew members who have completed their service onboard will be required to remain on the vessel during their stay in Hong Kong until transportation arrangement is made for them to travel directly to the airport to board flights for repatriation to their home countries so as to avoid contact with the local community;
 - incoming crew members arriving at the airport by flights from other places should possess a negative result of nucleic acid test for COVID-19 conducted at an ISO 15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located with the specimen collected within 48 hours before he/she

- departs his place of origin for entering into Hong Kong. Crew members who do not possess the test results will be denied entry. They should also go on-board the vessel immediately and directly upon arrival in Hong Kong and should not stay in public places;
- point-to-point transfer should be arranged by the shipping companies/agents for crew members to travel to and from the vessel. Use of public transportation which will serve the general public at the same time is prohibited, and crew members should wear masks during the entire journey, etc.; and
 - shipping companies/agents which fail to comply with the above conditions will be denied crew change arrangement in Hong Kong.

Air crew travelling between Hong Kong and the Mainland, Macao, Taiwan or foreign places to perform their duties

- All air crew must have a negative result of nucleic acid test for COVID-19 done at an ISO 15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located, with the specimen collected within 48 hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong. Otherwise, the air crew must take a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 at the Temporary Specimen Collection Centre (TSCC) of the Department of Health (DH) upon arrival at the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) and wait for the test results there or at any other designated location.
- Airlines must arrange point-to-point transportation for their air crew to travel between the HKIA and their place of accommodation and prohibit the use of public transportation which will serve the general public at the same time. Airlines should also ensure that their air crew will self-isolate at a designated location in accordance with DH's requirements. Air crew should strictly observe the principle of minimising contact with the local community during their stay in Hong Kong.

Other exempted persons arriving Hong Kong at HKIA

- All exempted persons must have a negative result of nucleic acid test for COVID-19 done at an ISO15189-accredited laboratory or a laboratory recognised by the Government where the laboratory is located with the specimen collected within 48 hours prior to boarding the flight to Hong Kong. Otherwise, they must take a nucleic acid test for COVID-19 at DH's TSCC upon arrival at HKIA, and wait for the results there, or self-isolate at a designated location for 48 hours.

The spokesman said, "Goods vessels coming to Hong Kong for loading and unloading of cargoes are essential for the supply of daily necessities and services to Hong Kong, including daily goods, food, anti-epidemic supplies and medical materials, with a view to maintaining the smooth operation of Hong Kong. As such, the Government considers that crew members of these cargo vessels should be exempted from compulsory quarantine to allow them to undergo crew change in Hong Kong. We believe that after tightening the

relevant conditions, public concerns about the public health risks can be suitably addressed."

The spokesman added, "On the premises of protecting the health of Hong Kong people and safeguarding Hong Kong's robust healthcare system, further to the announcement on July 7, we have further tightened the testing and quarantine arrangement for exempted persons arriving Hong Kong in accordance with the actual situation and anti-epidemic need. The Government will continue to closely monitor the latest situation of COVID-19 around the world and review the quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travellers entering Hong Kong from other control points including exempted persons."