

Government finishes exercise on “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in Central and Western District and enforcement operation for breaches of compulsory testing notice

The Government yesterday (March 15) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" effective from 9pm yesterday, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in Central and Western District (i.e. Golden Phoenix Court, 1-2 St. Stephen's Lane; and Blocks A and M, Hing Wah Mansion, 1 Babington Path, Central and Western District) were required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing were required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area had undergone testing and the test results were mostly ascertained. Moreover, the Government issued a compulsory testing notice yesterday, requiring persons who had been present at the above buildings for more than two hours from March 2 to 15, 2021, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, to undergo compulsory testing on or before March 17. The Government announced the completion of the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today (March 16) and carried out enforcement actions in the "restricted area" afterwards to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone compulsory testing in accordance with the requirements of the relevant declaration and compulsory testing notice. The Government announced that the enforcement operation ended at around 9am today.

In this exercise, the Home Affairs Department (HAD) (including the Kwai Tsing District Office and the Tsuen Wan District Office), the Hong Kong Police Force, the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department, and the Department of Health mobilised around 340 staff to arrange for implementation of the declaration and enforcement actions for breaches of the compulsory testing notice issued earlier.

The Government provided simple food for persons subject to compulsory testing, including canned food, cup noodles and corn kernels, etc, so as to facilitate the dinner arrangements of some persons subject to compulsory testing. One box of masks was also provided to persons subject to compulsory testing to help them fight against the virus.

The HAD also set up a hotline for people restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance.

The Government thanks persons subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding. With everyone's co-operation and efforts, coupled with the tireless efforts of the testing contractors, residents have been informed about their testing results by SMS notification. After finishing the compulsory testing exercise at around 7am today, the Government took enforcement actions in the "restricted area" immediately to verify that all people in the "restricted area" had undergone testing according to the requirements of the declaration and the compulsory testing notice. Persons who could present an SMS notification containing a negative testing result or wear a wristband as proof of having undergone the compulsory testing could leave the "restricted area" through the designated exit after providing personal information to a prescribed officer. The enforcement operation was completed at around 9am. Nine persons were found not having undergone compulsory testing and compulsory testing orders were issued to them. Taking into account the above situation, the Secretary for Food and Health revoked the "restriction-testing declaration" in accordance with Cap. 599J (see attachment).

The Government hopes that the some 40 households who have not answered the door will contact the Government for arrangement of testing as soon as possible after they read the notices put up by the Government, in the hope of eliminating the possible risk of further spread of the virus in the community.

The Government understands that the residents in the district are anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases recently, and they are worried that the resurgence of the pandemic will affect their health and livelihood. The Government hopes this temporary inconvenience will completely cut the local transmission chains and ease residents' worries and fear, so that they will regain confidence in resuming social and business activities in the area, and return to a normal life.

The Government thanks all participating government staff and the testing agencies for their hard work. The Government is also grateful to those subject to compulsory testing for their support and understanding, and their full co-operation during this period in undergoing testing and waiting for the results at home.

The Government as a whole is united in fighting against the virus despite all the difficulties, and provided testing for all the residents in the district within a short period of time in the hope of achieving zero cases in the district.

The Government will seriously follow up on the compliance situation of the compulsory testing notices and the "restriction-testing declaration" by persons subject to compulsory testing. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person will also be issued with a compulsory testing order, requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order or the "restriction-testing declaration" is an offence and the offender may be liable to a fine of level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.