

Government makes “restriction-testing declaration” in respect of specified “restricted area” in North Point

The Government today (January 28) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration) effective from 7pm, by which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted area" in North Point (i.e. Blocks A, B, C and D of Tung Fat Building, Kam Ping Street. See Annex.) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing in accordance with the arrangement by the Government. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing the compulsory testing exercise at about 7am tomorrow (January 29), in order to achieve the goal of zero cases in the district with concerted efforts.

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a restriction-testing declaration."

"As eight confirmed cases and five preliminary positive cases of COVID-19 recently occurred at Block C, Tung Fat Building, Kam Ping Street in North Point, involving different units and floors, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) has co-ordinated with relevant Government departments and conducted a site inspection to the concerned floors and units of Block C, Tung Fat Building yesterday afternoon to investigate and examine if environmental factors were involved in the infection of the cases. The CHP took into account the opinions from experts and decided to carry out prudent measures on infection control. The Department of Health yesterday issued quarantine orders to all asymptomatic residents of units 6 and 7 on all floors of Block C, Tung Fat Building (1st Floor to 15th Floor) and transferred them to quarantine centres. Residents nearby are worried of the situation.

"After risk assessment, we think it is necessary to issue a restriction-testing declaration for the 'restricted area' to confirm all persons in the 'restricted area' have undergone compulsory testing, so as to break the transmission chain in the district and dispel the worries of residents in the district."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 2am tomorrow. Persons subject to compulsory testing will be arranged to undergo nucleic acid test at specimen collection stations where dedicated staff will collect samples through combined nasal and throat swabs. Persons subject to compulsory testing must stay at their place of

residence until all test results are ascertained to avoid cross-infection risk. The Government will arrange door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons, or make arrangement for them to self-collect and submit the deep throat saliva specimen.

"We understand that the arrangement will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted area' as soon as possible at night after most people are released from work. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercise at around 7am tomorrow with a view to allowing residents who have undergone testing to start getting to work accordingly. The Government will make public announcement on the time of expiry of the declaration officially. In the case when employees are unable to go to work because of the declaration, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not to deduct the salary or benefit from the employees."

In order to maintain public and emergency services within the "restricted area", the Government and relevant working staff (such as healthcare officers and other officers, testing service providers engaged by the Government, cleaning service providers, etc.) are allowed to enter and leave the "restricted area" on condition that personal information and contacts are given, as well as certain infection control instructions are followed (including undergoing testing before leaving the "restricted area" without the need to wait for the test results).

The Government has prepared simple food and basic cleaning tools for the residents restricted by the declaration. The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which operates from 7pm today for residents restricted by the declaration to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government understands the residents in the district are worried and anxious because of the increase in confirmed cases in recent days. Under the epidemic, businesses in the area have been hit hard and brought to a standstill. Residents' livelihood is also affected. 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 earlier issued compulsory testing notices to require any person who had been present at Block C of Tung Fat Building for more than two hours at any time during the period from January 12 to January 25 (including but not limited to residents, visitors and workers), and any person who had been present at Block A, Block B and Block D of Tung Fat Building for more than two hours at any time during the period from January 14 to January 27 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), to undergo compulsory testing.

Persons in the "restricted area" who have undergone testing from January 26 to 28, 2021, and are able to provide the SMS notification through mobile phone or related certification containing the test results, are not required to take the test again. However, they are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. Also, any person who had been present at Blocks A, B, C and D of Tung Fat Building for more than two hours during the specified period, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, they must undergo compulsory testing by the same time as mentioned above.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the result patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the concerned persons have complied with the compulsory testing notices and restriction-testing declaration. Any person who fails to comply with the compulsory testing notices commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would 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 compulsory testing order or the restriction-testing declaration is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.