

Government makes “restriction-testing declarations” and issues compulsory testing notices in respect of specified “restricted areas” in Tuen Mun

The Government today (February 6) exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to make "restriction-testing declarations" (declarations) effective from 7.30pm, under which people (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing") within the specified "restricted areas" in Tuen Mun (i.e. Leung Kit House, excluding LKWFS Chu Sui Lan Anglo-Chinese Kindergarten on G/F, and Leung Wai House, Leung King Estate, 31 Tin King Road, Tuen Mun. See Annexes) are required to stay in their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to stay in their premises until all such persons identified in the "restricted areas" have undergone testing and the test results are mostly ascertained. The Government aims at finishing these exercises around noon tomorrow (February 7).

A Government spokesman said, "Under Cap. 599J, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, make a 'restriction-testing declaration'. As the sewage discharged from the above buildings were tested positive for COVID-19, it is suspected that there are asymptomatic patients in the buildings. Given the risks of infection in the relevant areas are assessed to be likely higher, the Government decided to make 'restriction-testing declarations' for the relevant areas."

The Government will set up temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted areas" and request persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing before 1am tomorrow. Arrangements will be made for persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo a 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 for door-to-door specimen collection for people with impaired mobility and elderly persons.

The Government spokesman said, "We understand that these exercises will cause inconvenience to the public. The Government has made arrangements to carry out testing for all persons present in the 'restricted areas' as soon as possible. The aim is to strive to complete testing of all identified persons subject to compulsory testing and confirm the results, and finish the exercises around noon tomorrow. The Government will make public announcement when the declarations expire officially. In the cases in which employees are

unable to go to work because of the declarations, the Government hopes their employers can exercise discretion and not deduct the salaries or benefits of the employees."

If staying in the "restricted areas" will cause unreasonable hardship to individuals who are not residents in the areas when the declarations takes effect, government officers may exercise discretion and allow that person to leave the area after considering the individual circumstances. That person must have followed the instructions to undergo testing and leave his/her personal information for contact purposes.

Persons in the "restricted area" of Leung Kit House, Leung King Estate who have undergone testing today according to the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, and are able to provide the SMS notification through a 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, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at Leung Kit House for more than two hours from January 20, 2022 to February 6, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before February 8, 2022.

As for Leung Wai House, Leung King Estate, according to the compulsory testing notice to be issued today, any person who had been present at Leung Wai House for more than two hours from January 24, 2022 to February 6, 2022, even if they were not present in the "restricted area" at the time when the declaration took effect, must undergo compulsory testing on or before February 8, 2022. As a mutant strain is involved, for prudence's sake, vaccinated persons and persons who have recently been tested are also required to undergo testing.

The Home Affairs Department has set up a hotline (Tel: 2835 1473) which starts operation at 7.30pm today for residents restricted by the declarations to make enquiries and seek assistance. The Social Welfare Department will also provide assistance to the affected persons.

The Government appeals to persons subject to compulsory testing for their full co-operation by registering and undergoing testing, and waiting for the results patiently at home. The Government will strictly follow up on whether the persons concerned 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.