

Government strengthens testing requirements for persons arriving at Hong Kong from foreign places

The Government has exercised the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and published in the Gazette a compulsory testing notice, which requires persons arriving at Hong Kong after a specified date to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test on the 19th or 20th day following their arrival at Hong Kong for early identification of imported cases.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) said today (December 18), "According to the guidelines of the World Health Organization, the incubation period of the virus could be as long as 14 days. Hence, persons arriving at Hong Kong from foreign places are subject to compulsory quarantine at designated places for 14 days at present. For persons arriving at Hong Kong from places outside China, in addition to the test upon arrival, they also have to undergo testing at day 12 of the quarantine period. There were some confirmed cases identified by tests taken on day-12 of the quarantine period in the past."

"For early identification of imported cases to achieve the objective of preventing the importation of cases, after making reference to expert advice, the Government will require persons who arrive at Hong Kong from places outside China and have completed the 14-day quarantine to undergo another test on the 19th or 20th day following their arrival at Hong Kong. This is to ensure that with compulsory testing, no case would slip through the net even under very exceptional cases where the incubation period of the virus is longer than the quarantine period."

According to the compulsory testing notice, any person aged six or above who arrives at Hong Kong on or after December 2, 2020 and is placed under quarantine pursuant to a Quarantine Order under section 3 of the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), must undergo testing on the 19th or 20th day following the person's arrival at Hong Kong. The 19th or 20th day following the person's arrival at Hong Kong is counted with the day of arrival as the 1st day. For example, for a person who arrived at Hong Kong on December 2, 2020, he/she would have completed the 14-day quarantine on December 15, 2020, and should undergo testing on December 20 or 21, 2020.

Persons subject to compulsory testing must attend any community testing centres to undergo testing (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/). Persons subject to compulsory testing must register to undergo testing by presenting the identity document stated on the Quarantine Order and, as far as practicable, the Quarantine Order. Persons subject to compulsory testing must also keep the SMS (mobile phone text message) notification containing

the result of the test, and provide the relevant SMS notification for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the test.

"If persons who are subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the community testing centres."

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901 which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. Persons who are subject to compulsory testing can check the community testing centre's appointment status in advance when they plan to conduct testing at any of the centres. The hotlines of the community testing centres are at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

The Government will seriously verify whether the relevant persons had complied with the testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice 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/her to undergo testing within a specified timeframe. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "Furthermore, the Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases) to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons in an effective manner. The FHB will publish compulsory testing notices regarding particular groups when necessary taking into account the epidemic development and the testing participation rate."