

Housing Department continues to inspect its public premises for disease prevention measures

To prevent the spread of coronavirus disease 2019 in the community, the Housing Department continues to inspect public premises under its jurisdiction and take enforcement actions to ensure compliance with relevant anti-epidemic regulations.

According to the prevailing Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 559G), any group gatherings of more than four persons in any public place are prohibited. Offenders are liable to a maximum penalty of a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months, or may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

"Officers of the Department's special squads have been patrolling the public areas of the public housing estates such as gardens and sitting-out areas. If a member of the public is found in breach of the above Regulation, he/she will first be warned verbally. If repeated warnings are in vain, enforcement action by summons or issue of a fixed penalty notice will be taken," a spokesman for the Housing Department said today (October 12).

The spokesman stressed that if the offence of illegal gambling in public place is committed by public housing residents, five marks will be allotted under the "Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement in Public Housing Estates" (Marking Scheme) once they are convicted.

The Marking Scheme was introduced in 2003 to maintain a hygienic environment in public housing estates. Three to 15 points will be allotted to the subject households according to the degree of seriousness of the misdeeds committed. If 16 points are accrued within two years, the tenancies/licences will be terminated.

Since the implementation of the Regulation (Cap. 559G), the Housing Department has conducted 4 307 inspections at its public premises and 1 722 verbal warnings were issued. Since January 2020, the Department had also referred 767 suspected cases of illegal gambling in public places to police for investigation, and 118 convicted households had been allotted points under the Marking Scheme upon conviction.

"According to the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 559I), members of the public are required to wear masks at public areas for the sake of preventing and controlling the spread of the disease. Persons who violate the Regulation are subject to a fixed penalty of \$2,000," the spokesman said.

To enforce this Regulation, staff of the Housing Department have issued 7 569 verbal warnings and two fixed penalty notices during 6 247 inspections conducted at its public premises, including gardens, sitting-out areas, wet markets and shopping centres.

The spokesman said that the Department will continue to inspect its public premises and take enforcement actions against persons breaching the disease prevention regulations. He urged members of the public to strictly observe the regulations to safeguard their own and public health.