

Labour Department reminds foreign domestic helpers to comply with tightened social distancing measures

The Labour Department (LD) today (February 18) again reminded foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to comply with the series of tightened social distancing measures announced by the Government.

An LD spokesman said, "According to the amended Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G), the restriction on the number of persons allowed per group gathering in a public place has been reduced from four to two. Multi-household gatherings at private premises involving more than two households are also prohibited. Religious activity is no longer exempted. Moreover, the mandatory mask-wearing requirement under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I) has been extended. Any person failing to comply with the above relevant Regulations may be subject to a fixed penalty of \$5,000."

Details of the above tightened social distancing measures can be found in the relevant press release [here](#).

During the weekends in February, the LD is continuing to conduct mobile broadcasts in multiple languages at popular FDH gathering places across the territory to call upon FDHs to comply with the relevant requirements. On February 19 and 20, the LD will, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Police Force, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, conduct joint operations at Tamar Park in Admiralty, Edinburgh Place, the pedestrian zone in Chater Road, Statue Square in Central and elsewhere. Relevant departments will take enforcement action against those who still refuse to follow the regulations after repeated reminders. On February 13, the Police issued fixed penalty tickets, after giving warnings, to 17 persons suspected of breaching Cap. 599G at various locations in Central District (please refer to the relevant press release [here](#) for details).

The spokesman continued, "We remind FDHs to strictly observe the requirements and appeal to them to avoid gatherings (including those in boarding facilities), food sharing and other social activities on their rest days and holidays, and stay at home for rest as far as possible in order to safeguard their personal health and reduce the risk of infection. We also appeal to employers to explain the current special circumstances when discussing rest day arrangements with their FDHs and call for their mutual understanding."

The LD reminds employers that under the Employment Ordinance, an employer may reach an agreement with the FDH to assign another rest day to substitute the original rest day. The other rest day must be within the same

month before the original rest day or within 30 days after it. At the same time, employers must not require FDHs to work on their rest day. If an employer requests an FDH to work on a rest day, the employer must substitute another rest day for the FDH within 30 days after the original rest day; the employer must also notify the FDH of the arrangement within 48 hours after the latter is required to work. An employer who compels his or her FDH to work on a rest day without the agreement of the FDH or fails to grant rest days to the FDH is in breach of the Employment Ordinance and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000.

Hong Kong residents, including FDHs, can get vaccinated against COVID-19 free of charge. For booking and details, please visit the designated website of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk). The Government appeals to FDHs to get vaccinated as soon as possible to protect themselves and others.

Should FDHs and their employers have any enquiries on employment matters, they may contact the LD through the dedicated FDH hotline at 2157 9537 (manned by 1823), by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk or through the online form on the dedicated portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk).