

Latest quarantine arrangements for foreign domestic helpers

The Government today (December 29) announced that Regala Skycity Hotel (Regala) on Lantau Island will be added as a Designated Quarantine Facility (DQF) for foreign domestic workers (FDHs) from January 2022 onwards. As the Omicron variant is spreading rapidly around the world, the Government needs to reserve all rooms at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre (PBQC) for quarantine purposes in order to prevent the variant from entering the community. Starting from January 3, 2022, Phases 1 and 2 of PBQC will thus cease taking reservations for FDHs coming to work in Hong Kong. In its initial period serving as a DQF, Regala will assist the Government in arranging by phases the intake of FDHs residing at PBQC to continue their quarantine. The FDHs, employers and employment agencies (EAs) concerned need not bear any additional costs or make any additional arrangements for the transfer to Regala, and the Government will inform them of the transfer arrangements one by one according to schedule.

A Government spokesman said, "Currently, apart from the PBQC, two DQFs for FDHs (i.e. Rambler Garden Hotel and Courtyard by Marriott Hong Kong Sha Tin) are providing a total of 1 000 rooms. Regala will serve as a new DQF with an additional 1 138 rooms starting from January 2022. Recently, the global epidemic situation has worsened considerably due to the Omicron variant. The Government has to stay vigilant to prevent a fifth wave epidemic or outbreak in the community. After reviewing the situation holistically and prudently, the Government deems it necessary to reserve all rooms at the PBQC for meeting the quarantine purpose, and Phases 1 and 2 of the PBQC will cease taking reservations for FDHs from January 3, 2022, onwards. The Government is in discussions with another hotel with a view to having it serve as the fourth DQF within a short period of time. We will continue to include suitable hotels to serve as DQFs for FDHs."

The quarantine/transfer arrangements for FDHs at Phases 1 and 2 of the PBQC are as follows:

1. For FDHs residing at the PBQC: For FDHs whose quarantine completion date as shown on the compulsory quarantine order falls before January 5, 2022, they will continue to reside at the PBQC to complete the quarantine. As for FDHs with a quarantine completion date falling on or after January 5, 2022, the Government will, starting from January 1, 2022, arrange for them to transfer to Regala by phases.
2. For those whose FDHs have yet to check in at the PBQC but have already made an application for a room reservation through the PBQC's booking system: For applicants who have already received an SMS acknowledging receipt of the application, the Labour Department (LD) will inform them one by one through email about the relevant arrangements. As for applicants who have, after receiving the SMS acknowledging receipt of the application, further received a confirmation email from the LD, the

relevant arrangements are: (a) FDHs who would check in at the PBQC before January 1, 2022, will be arranged to transfer to Regala by phases from January 1 to continue the quarantine; and (b) for FDHs with an original check-in date at the PBQC falling on or after January 1, 2022, the Government will arrange them to check in at Regala directly upon arrival in Hong Kong.

The Government will notify the FDHs, employers and EAs concerned one by one according to schedule. These FDHs, employers and EAs need not make any arrangement for the aforementioned transfer or direct check-in at Regala. Nor do they need to separately reserve a room at Regala for the FDHs. The Government will bear relevant costs, including the difference in room rates between the hotel and the PBQC. FDHs at the PBQC will have to undergo a COVID-19 test 24 hours prior to departing for Regala, and only those who are tested negative will transfer to the hotel.

While most of the rooms at Regala will be reserved under the above arrangements for FDHs who would originally undergo quarantine at the PBQC in January 2022, its remaining rooms will be open for quarantine of other newly arrived FDHs. Starting from 9.30am on December 30, 2021, employers and EAs may reserve a room on or after January 5, 2022, through the online booking system of Regala (www.regala-hotels.com). A fee of \$750 per night per room (including three meals and all charges) will be payable. The hotel will adjust the number of rooms open for reservation each day having regard to the overall booking situation.

Employers and EAs must register using the real name as shown on the valid passport of the residing FDHs, and rooms reserved are not transferrable. Reservation applications made under the name of another person or party will not be processed. When making the room reservation, the FDH's passport copy, a valid employment visa and a recognised vaccination record must be made available. The reservation process is completed upon issuance of a booking confirmation by the hotel. FDHs will need to provide the above documents for verification when they check into the facility.

Employers and EAs should allow sufficient time for preparing the documents required and completing the procedures when arranging for their FDHs to come to Hong Kong. They should only book an air ticket for their FDHs after a room has been successfully reserved in a DQF. Payment will be refunded to the person making the reservation if a change or cancellation of room booking is required because an FDH is tested positive for COVID-19 before arrival in Hong Kong, or because of a change or cancellation of flights by the airline or a lockdown, provided that relevant supporting documents are submitted in advance. An FDH who does not have a booking confirmation by a DQF will not be allowed to board a flight for Hong Kong or may be denied entry into Hong Kong upon arrival.

The above arrangement for quarantine at DQFs is applicable to FDHs who have been fully vaccinated in regions where Hong Kong has reached a recognition agreement arrangement on their vaccination records (the currently applicable regions include Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand, etc). For the full

list of applicable regions, please visit:

www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/places_of_issuance_recognised_vaccination_records.pdf. A list of DQFs is in the Annex.

As for FDHs who have received full vaccination in Hong Kong, they may undergo compulsory quarantine at a general designated quarantine hotel or a DQF.

The dedicated FDH Portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk) set up by the LD provides information and useful links relating to the quarantine arrangements of FDHs. For enquiries, please contact the LD through its 24-hour hotline at 2717 1771 (manned by 1823) or by email to fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk.