

One-off compulsory testing scheme for taxi drivers

The Transport Department (TD) will launch the one-off compulsory testing scheme for taxi drivers starting from December 9, 2020. A total of 13 Dedicated Testing Centres will provide service for two weeks until December 22. The Government appeals to taxi drivers to participate in the testing as early as possible to safeguard their health and minimise the risk of community transmission.

In view of the development of the epidemic situation, the Secretary for Food and Health, in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap 599J), published a compulsory testing notice today (December 5), requiring any person who intends to, at any time during the period from December 25, 2020 to January 23, 2021, drive a taxi to undergo polymerase chain reaction-based nucleic acid tests for COVID-19 according to the requirements and procedures specified in the notice.

The aforementioned taxi drivers shall visit any of the Dedicated Testing Centres set up by the TD during the two-week period from December 9 to 22 to receive free specimen collection services using combined nasal and throat swabs. The locations, opening dates and hours of the 13 Dedicated Testing Centres across the territory are at Annex. Taxi drivers are required to make appointment by telephone and undergo the test at the Dedicated Testing Centres at a specific time slot. If the taxi drivers concerned cannot make it to undergo testing at TD's Dedicated Testing Centres, they can arrange testing by themselves at their own expenses in a private laboratory recognised by the Department of Health (DH) (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories RTPCR.pdf), including any of the Community Testing Centres set up by the Government (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/), and undergo testing as instructed by the relevant staff.

The taxi drivers concerned should obtain and keep the test report or the relevant SMS or email notification after the testing for checking by the enforcement agencies during the period from December 25, 2020 to January 23, 2021.

Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000 which will be implemented soon. 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.

A spokesman for the TD said that taxi drivers may dial the registration hotline 1836 168 from December 7, 9am to 9pm daily, to make an appointment for the testing at the Dedicated Testing Centres for taxi drivers. Same-day

appointment will not be offered by this registration hotline. Duty officers of the telephone booking service centres will register the name, taxi driver identity plate number and contact number of the taxi driver. Upon successful registration, an SMS to confirm the date, time and location to conduct the collection of specimen will be sent to the taxi driver. Taxi drivers are advised to prepare relevant materials beforehand for a smooth registration.

Upon arrival at the Dedicated Testing Centres for taxi drivers at the appointment time slot, taxi drivers are required to present a valid taxi driver identity plate for identity verification. Duty officers of the testing agency will collect the specimen of nasopharyngeal swab test from taxi drivers, and deliver the specimen to laboratories for testing. As no personal information will be indicated on the specimen bottles, the testing agency will only have records of the barcode numbers of the specimen bottles and will not collect any personal information. In order to receive the test result, drivers are required to register their personal information at the Government website (www.tgptest.gov.hk). Drivers who have a negative test result will receive an SMS notification by the Government within 48 hours. Those who test positive as confirmed by the DH will receive calls from the DH to arrange for isolation and treatment in public hospitals in accordance with established procedures.

The spokesman reminds the taxi drivers to make advance bookings for testing services through the registration hotline as early as possible and properly keep the SMS notification as proof of their test results. Those who choose to undergo self-arranged tests at their own expenses should also keep their test reports. Besides, taxi drivers who have participated in the testing at the Dedicated Testing Centres for taxi drivers will be issued with a "Compulsory Testing Tag for Taxi Drivers" at the centres. The tag can be displayed at a prominent position inside the taxi compartment to enable passengers' checking.

For details of the testing service, please visit the website of the TD (www.td.gov.hk).