

Public should take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning

Following a notification from Yan Chai Hospital (YCH) on a case of carbon monoxide poisoning, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (January 29) appealed to members of the public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning.

The case involved a 17-year-old woman, who was found unconscious when she had a shower inside the bathroom at home yesterday (January 28). She was sent to YCH and was later transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for treatment. She is now in stable condition.

The EMSD conducted a site investigation immediately upon receiving the report. According to the information provided by the residents, the subject gas water heater was not bought in Hong Kong. The concerned model has not been approved by the EMSD and did not bear a "GU" mark. Preliminary investigation finding revealed that exhaust flue was not installed for the gas water heater. With the exhaust flue gas discharged into the bathroom, coupled with poor ventilation, the accumulated carbon monoxide caused the carbon monoxide poisoning. Further investigation by the EMSD is ongoing. If the investigation results confirm that there was contravention of the Gas Safety Ordinance, the EMSD will consider initiating prosecution actions against the person concerned.

The CHP said that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas which is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel which contains carbon, such as wood, natural gas and gasoline.

Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death.

The CHP reminded members of the public that a gas water heater should be used in a well-ventilated area. They should seek medical attention immediately if suspected of developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

The EMSD also reminds members of the public of the following:

1. Occupants should buy and use gas water heater which has been approved by the EMSD and bears a "GU" mark;
2. All installations, replacements or repair work on gas water heaters must be carried out by a registered gas installer employed by a registered gas contractor; and
3. Occupants should arrange regular safety inspection of gas water heater

every 18 months by a registered gas contractor. If the condition of the gas water heater is in doubt, please stop using it immediately and contact the registered gas supply company.