

Refined arrangement for specified dates booking of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles"

The Transport Department (TD) announced today (February 5) that, to facilitate the applicants of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" to travel from Hong Kong to Guangdong via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, starting from tomorrow (February 6), the "Specified Dates Booking System" will be refined to shorten the periods of booking for departure and cancellation of booking for departure. The arrangements are as follows:

(i) New arrangement for booking for departure

From the existing requirement of making a booking no less than two calendar days before departure, to shorten to at or before noon on one calendar day before departure. For example, the applicant of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" may make a booking for departure on February 7 via the "Specified Dates Booking System" at or before noon of February 6.

(ii) New arrangement for cancellation of booking for departure

From the existing requirement of putting up a cancellation request no less than three calendar days before departure, to shorten to at or before noon on one calendar day before departure. For example, the applicant of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" may cancel a booking for departure on February 7 via the "Specified Dates Booking System" at or before noon of February 6.

The TD also reminds applicants for "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" to make reservations in advance through the TD's "Specified Dates Booking System", and drive to Guangdong Province via the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge in accordance with the specified date and time reserved. The TD will maintain close liaison with the Mainland authorities and conduct random checks on the vehicle crossing records of "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles" from time to time to ensure that applicants comply with the terms and conditions of participating in "Northbound Travel for Hong Kong Vehicles".

Missing man in Wan Chai located

À Á À Á A man who went missing in Wan Chai has been located.

À Á À Á Choi Kin-fan, aged 55, went missing after he left a hospital on Queen's Road East on December 24, 2023 night. His family made a report to Police on February 1.

À À À À The man was located in a hospital on Gascoigne Road, Yau Ma Tei this afternoon (February 5). No suspicious circumstances were detected.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (February 5) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From January 28 to February 3, one LD case was reported. The case involved a male patient aged 73 with underlying diseases, who lives in Tseung Kwan O and visited Thailand during the incubation period.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of February 3, four LD cases had been reported this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection, including poor maintenance of water systems; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus that support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill

the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

â€‹The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh-water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres (μm) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2 μm filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
 2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

â€‹The public may visit the CHP's [LD page](#), the [Code of Practice for Prevention of LD](#) and the [Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management](#) of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's [risk-based strategy](#) for prevention and control of LD.

Government urges public to stop using “energy-saving ring” on gas cookers to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) today (February 5) appealed to members of the public to stop using an "energy-saving ring" on gas cookers to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning accidents.

A carbon monoxide poisoning case was reported to the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health by Tuen Mun Hospital (TMH), which involved a 70-year-old female. She developed loss of consciousness after cooking with a gas cooker at home on February 3. She was immediately sent to TMH and was later transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for treatment. She is now in stable condition and has been discharged.

A preliminary investigation by the EMSD revealed that the type of the gas cooker has been approved by the Gas Authority and its operation was in order. During the incident, the two burners of the gas cooker were fitted with accessories, commonly known as "energy-saving rings", which were not supplied by the original gas cooker manufacturer. Coupled with poor indoor ventilation, there was an increase in the indoor carbon monoxide level, causing the accident. Upon receiving the information, the EMSD and the C&ED immediately conducted inspections at shops in various districts in Hong Kong. No "energy-saving rings" were found for sale in local market.

The EMSD emphasised that there have been several accidents involving "energy-saving rings", where testing results showed that when using a gas cooker with the "energy-saving ring", emissions of carbon monoxide increased substantially, which has significantly exceeded the safety standard specified in the Basic Safety Assessment under Approval of Domestic Gas Appliances. There was also no energy-saving effect as claimed. The EMSD urged the public to stop using any accessories not supplied by original cooker manufacturers, such as the "energy-saving rings", and to ensure adequate ventilation when using gas cookers by keeping kitchen windows open and exhaust fans operating. For proper use and maintenance of domestic gas cooking appliances, please visit the EMSD

website: www.emsd.gov.hk/en/gas_safety/gas_safety_tips_to_users/safe_use_proper_use_and_maintenance/domestic_gas_cooking_appliances/index.html.

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas that is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel that contains carbon. Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headaches, 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. Members of the public are reminded to seek medical attention immediately if they suspect they may be developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

â€‹The C&ED said that under the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance, it is an offence to supply, manufacture or import into Hong Kong consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirement for consumer goods. The maximum penalty for the offence is a fine of \$100,000 and an imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment on a subsequent conviction. Members of the public with information relating to "energy-saving rings" may make a report via the C&ED's 24-hour hotline 2545 6182, or via email (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).

Contractors/employers and employees urged workplace safety before Chinese New Year holidays

With Chinese New Year around the corner, the Labour Department has urged contractors, employers and employees to be more vigilant and take adequate safety precautions at workplaces before the holidays.

A spokesperson for the department said today (February 5) that employers and employees should pay more attention before Chinese New Year holidays to work safety to prevent accidents.

The spokesperson said, "As Chinese New Year is coming, employees may become less aware of work safety because of the festive atmosphere, or may have to rush to complete work before the holidays. Employers should therefore step up monitoring to ensure workplace safety and eliminate potential hazards through pre-holiday safety inspections, thereby minimising the chance of grave consequences during and after the Chinese New Year holidays. Safety precautions before the holidays include turning off the power for plant and machinery, proper storage of chemicals, stacking materials in an orderly manner, extinguishing naked flames, shutting down gas welding equipment, and securing temporary structures.

"Management should remind supervisors and employees not to compromise work safety for tight work schedules, including failure to take adequate safety precautions, failure to follow safety procedures, and failure to use personal protective equipment. Risk assessment should be conducted by competent persons prior to the commencement of different work processes, with safe work method statements formulated and proper monitoring systems in place, especially for work involving high-risk operation, such as working at height, lifting operation, tunnelling works and electrical work," the spokesperson added.

The general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and

systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the relevant provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years on conviction on indictment; or \$3 million and imprisonment for six months on summary conviction.

Meanwhile, employees should co-operate by following safety instructions and by using safety equipment.

For enquiries on occupational safety and health, please contact the department's occupational safety officers at 2559 2297.