

CHP reminds public on precautions against cold weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (December 23) reminded the public, particularly the elderly and people with chronic illnesses, to adopt appropriate measures to protect their health in view of the cold weather.

A spokesman for the CHP said that cold weather can easily trigger or exacerbate diseases, especially among the elderly and persons suffering from heart disease, respiratory illness or other chronic illnesses.

"Elderly people have less insulating fat beneath their skin to keep them warm and their body temperature control mechanism may be weaker. Their body may not be able to appropriately respond to the cold weather," the spokesman said.

Some senior persons may have decreased mobility, which can in turn impair their ability to generate and conserve body heat. Chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes and endocrine disorders may undermine the health of elderly people and lower their metabolic rate, subsequently causing their body to generate less heat. Persons with chronic illnesses such as chronic respiratory illnesses or heart disease are vulnerable to disease aggravation due to cold weather.

The CHP reminded the public, in particular the elderly and persons with chronic illnesses, to adopt the following preventive measures:

- Take note of the weather forecast. Wear warm clothing, including hats, scarves, gloves and socks accordingly;
- Consume sufficient food to ensure adequate calorie intake;
- Perform regular exercise to facilitate blood circulation and heat production;
- Stay in a warm environment and avoid prolonged outdoor exposure;
- Use heaters with care, and maintain adequate indoor ventilation; and
- Seek medical advice if feeling unwell.

In addition, the public should avoid alcoholic beverages.

"Drinking alcohol cannot keep you warm. Alcohol accelerates the loss of body heat through dilated blood vessels, resulting in chilling instead," the spokesman said.

"Parents should ensure that babies are sufficiently warm, but it is also important to keep babies relatively lightly clothed to avoid overheating them," the spokesman added.

Parents should observe the following safety measures when putting their children to bed:

- Keep the room well ventilated and at a comfortable temperature;
- Always place babies on their back to sleep. Leave their head, face and arms uncovered during sleep;
- Babies do not need pillows. Place babies on a firm and well-fitted mattress to sleep. Avoid soft objects, pillows and loose bedding;
- Let babies sleep in a cot placed in the parents' room and near their bed; and
- Maintain a smoke-free environment.

In addition, seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for all persons aged 6 months or above except those with known contraindications. Persons at higher risk of getting influenza and its complications, including the elderly and children, should receive seasonal influenza vaccination early. Please see details of the vaccination schemes on the [CHP's website](#).

A person who gets influenza and COVID-19 at the same time may be more seriously ill and would have a higher risk of death. Influenza vaccination may reduce the likelihood of hospitalisation and the length of stay. It is important for elderly persons, especially those residing in residential care homes, to receive both seasonal influenza vaccination and COVID-19 vaccination. They should also receive an additional booster against COVID-19 according to recommendations as soon as possible. The public should also maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Food-borne diseases, particularly those linked to hot pot cuisine, are also common in cold weather. The following preventive measures should be

taken:

- Wash hands before handling and consuming food;
- Do not patronise unlicensed vendors or those with poor hygienic standards while selecting food;
- Wash and cook all food thoroughly;
- Vegetables should be washed thoroughly in clean running water before cooking and consumption. When appropriate, scrub vegetables with hard surfaces with a clean brush to remove dirt and substances, including pesticide residues and contaminants, from the surface and crevices;
- Shrimps should be fully cooked until the shells turn red and the flesh turns white and opaque;
- For shellfish such as scallops and geoduck, scrub the shells thoroughly and remove internal organs;
- Most hot pot ingredients should be stored in a refrigerator at 4 degrees Celsius or below, while frozen food should be stored in a freezer at -18 degrees C or below;
- Never use raw eggs as a dipping sauce for hot pot; and
- Use different sets of chopsticks to handle raw and cooked food to avoid cross-contamination.

In addition, when using fuel-burning appliances, especially in indoor areas, the public should ensure adequate ventilation to avoid harmful exposure to carbon monoxide (CO) and prevent CO poisoning.

For more health information, the public may call the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111) or visit the [CHP's website](#) and [Facebook Fanpage](#).

The public may also call Dial-a-Weather (1878 200) or visit the [website of the Hong Kong Observatory](#) for the latest weather information and forecast, or its [page on Weather Information for Senior Citizens](#).

Employers and employees should take precautions during cold weather

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Cold Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Cold Weather Warning is in force, they should take appropriate precautions such as reminding employees who have to work outdoors or in remote areas to wear appropriately warm clothing, and make arrangements for employees to rotate from outdoor to

indoor or sheltered work sites as far as possible. Employees should take note of the weather report, wear appropriately warm clothing and be mindful of their health conditions. They should notify their supervisors and seek medical help immediately if feeling unwell, such as having cold limbs and body shivering.

Regional flag day today

Three charities have been issued Public Subscription Permits to hold flag sales from 7am to 12.30pm today (December 23). They are, on Hong Kong Island, Pentecostal Holiness Church Shaukiwan Assembly Limited Gilead Social Service Centre; in Kowloon, Richmond Fellowship of Hong Kong; and in the New Territories, The Parents' Association of Pre-school Handicapped Children, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department (SWD) said.

Arrangements have been made with the charities to help people to distinguish among the three flag-selling activities.

Information on the three flag-selling organisations on December 23 is as follows:

Region	Name of organisation	Colour of collection bag	Colour of flag
Hong Kong Island	Pentecostal Holiness Church Shaukiwan Assembly Limited Gilead Social Service Centre	Purple	Beige
Kowloon	Richmond Fellowship of Hong Kong	Beige	Light yellow
New Territories	The Parents' Association of Pre-school Handicapped Children	Red	Blue

Details of the charitable fund-raising activities, including any updated information, covered by the issued Public Subscription Permits have been published on the GovHK website (www.gov.hk/en/theme/fundraising/search). Permits for flag days containing information on contact methods of the flag-selling organisations and the approved flag-selling activities have also been uploaded to the SWD's website (www.swd.gov.hk/en/ngo/controlofc/flagdays) for reference. For enquiries, please call the SWD's hotline at 2343 2255, or the designated hotline of the 1823 Call Centre at 3142 2678.

In the case of suspected fraudulent flag day activities, people should

not make any donation and should immediately report the matter to the Police, the spokesman added.

Transport Department's response to media enquiries

A spokesman for the Transport Department (TD) today (December 22) responded to media enquiries on the incident of errors for toll charging at Western Harbour Crossing after the toll service provider wrongly applied the old toll table in the morning on December 18. The time-varying tolls were implemented successfully at 5am on December 17 and have been operating normally since then. On December 18, the toll service provider found that there was an error in the toll table from 10.02am onwards, and corrected the tolls according to the correct time-varying toll table at 11.04am. On that day, the TD immediately requested the toll service provider to make refunds, conduct a serious investigation and immediately plug the loophole of the error, as well as propose improvement measures to the workflow and system operation in future.

According to the preliminary information provided by the toll service provider on that day, the incident did not involve a system problem but a human factor and it was suspected that someone tampered with the system. In order to ascertain whether the anomalous tampering was intentional, the Police therefore proactively launched an investigation.

The investigation revealed that the incident was caused by negligence of the staff of the toll service provider. Firstly, the staff responsible for the system did not clear an old command immediately when updating the toll tables for the implementation of the time-varying tolls. At 10.02am on December 18, another staff member responsible for the operation, mistakenly approved the old command with others when performing daily operational approvals, resulting in the replacement of the time-varying toll table by the old one and charged wrong tolls. According to the Police's investigation, the incident did not involve any criminal element.

TD has summoned the management of the toll service provider on December 20 to express strong dissatisfaction with the incident. As instructed by TD, the service provider also took immediate measures to step up monitoring of the proper functioning of the system to prevent intervention to the system, including internal human error intervention or external malicious intervention, and took internal disciplinary actions, including issuing written warnings to the staff concerned and terminating the duties of the supervisory staff. Also, the TD will arrange for an independent audit to review the system operation procedures of the toll service provider, and has already added in the key procedures of the system operation the requirement

of obtaining the TD's authorisation for double authentication, so as to ensure that similar incidents will not recur.

The TD has also received the report from the toll service provider and is reviewing the contents of the investigation report in detail. The TD will request the toll service provider to make further improvements.

Completion of inspection work by Buildings Department and Lands Department of houses along seafront of Redhill Peninsula

A Government spokesman said today (December 22) that, to combat unauthorised building works (UBWs) and unlawful occupation of government land of houses along the seafront of Redhill Peninsula, the Buildings Department (BD) and the Lands Department (LandsD) completed last month (November) inspection of all houses along the seafront and has been issuing removal orders and notices requiring cessation of occupation of government land to relevant owners based on inspection findings. The departments will also consider prosecution action against the offenders after examining the evidence and seeking legal advice. In addition, the two departments commenced the joint operation at Beaulieu Peninsula in Tuen Mun this month on suspected irregularities of houses along the seafront or near the slope.

"The BD and the LandsD commenced a large-scale joint operation on September 22 to focus inspections on the remaining 85 houses (i.e. houses along the seafront other than the four houses at the landslide location which were inspected earlier) along the seafront of Redhill Peninsula in accordance with the risk-based enforcement approach, and successfully entered all 85 houses for inspection and collection of evidence. At this stage, it is found that 29 of the houses involved both UBWs and unlawful occupation of government land, 40 involved UBWs, and one involved unlawful occupation of government land. No UBWs or unlawful occupation of government land were found for the remaining 15 houses. As the situation of UBWs in some of the houses requires further inspection and collection of evidence, the final number of houses involving UBWs is subject to further verification. The BD and the LandsD have been issuing removal orders under the Buildings Ordinance or notices pursuant to the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance respectively to require the relevant owners to remove the UBWs in private premises and land and require the relevant persons to demolish the structures on government land and cease occupation of the land," the spokesman said.

For cases impacting on the slope or building structure, the owners must

appoint registered building professionals to submit remedial proposals (including an assessment on the impact of the relevant UBWs on the overall slope and building structure) and building plans to the BD, and reinstate the affected parts of the buildings by registered contractors in accordance with the approved plans after obtaining the department's approval and consent. The relevant reinstatement works should be commenced within 90 days and completed within 150 days from the date of issuance of the order. For UBWs not involving the above circumstances, the owner must appoint registered building professionals and/or registered contractors to carry out the removal of UBWs in accordance with the simplified requirements and procedures of the Minor Works Control System and commence the works within 30 days and complete them within 60 days from the date of issuance of the order. The BD will also deliver the orders to the Land Registry for registration against the relevant property titles (commonly known as "imposing an encumbrance on the register").

For cases of unlawful occupation of government land, the relevant persons must submit a proposal for the demolition of structures on government land for approval by LandsD within 30 days from the date of the notice issued by the department and ensure that the works will not affect the safety and stability of the slope. The deadline for completion of demolition works will depend on the scale of the demolition works but should not exceed 150 days from the date of issuance of the relevant notice.

The BD will instigate prosecution against owners who fail to comply with the removal orders without reasonable excuse. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$200,000 and one-year imprisonment, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence continues. As for non-compliance with the LandsD's notice to demolish the structures on the government land or persons who continue to occupy government land in contravention with the notice without reasonable excuse, the LandsD will instigate prosecution against the persons concerned. If convicted on the first occasion, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment of six months, and a further fine of \$50,000 for each day that the offence continues; on each subsequent occasion of conviction, the maximum penalty is a fine of \$1,000,000 and imprisonment of six months, and a further fine of \$100,000 for each day that the offence continues. The owners must bear the costs of removing the UBWs and the structures occupying government land on their own.

Apart from issuing removal orders and notices requiring cessation of occupation of government land, the BD and the LandsD are continuing with their investigations of cases involving UBWs and unlawful occupation of government land, including the irregularities of the four houses at the earlier landslide location. If there is sufficient evidence, further prosecution action against the persons (including owners, professionals and contractors participating in the construction works of the UBWs) involved in the above cases of irregularities will be considered after seeking legal advice. Investigations of these cases are in progress. In addition, the Government is continuing with the investigation of causes of the earlier landslide. If it is found that UBWs or unlawful occupation of government land

in individual houses were related to the landslide, the Government will seek to recover the cost of emergency repair works and related costs incurred in the earlier upgrading of slopes from the relevant persons.

The Redhill Peninsula incident has revealed that UBWs or unlawful occupation of government land in houses along the seafront could pose safety hazards and risks to surrounding slopes. In line with the risk-based enforcement approach, the two departments commenced another joint operation this month, targeting houses along the seafront or near the slope on Beaulieu Peninsula in Tuen Mun. In the past, the BD has issued removal orders to individual houses in the estate and prosecuted those owners who failed to comply with the orders. However, as there are still other houses on Beaulieu Peninsula involving UBWs, unauthorised site formation works and unlawful occupation of government land as shown in the aerial photos, the BD and the LandsD decided to target the houses along the seafront or near the slope in the estate and commence the joint operation.