

Fourth phase of Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme takes full effect December 1

The fourth phase of the Mandatory Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme (MEELS) will be fully implemented on December 1 to include light emitting diode (LED) lamps, gas cookers and gas instantaneous water heaters.

MEELS was introduced in May 2008 under the Energy Efficiency (Labelling of Products) Ordinance (Cap. 598) (Ordinance), which requires energy labels to be shown on all prescribed products for supply in Hong Kong. The energy labels classify the energy performance of prescribed products into five grades. Products with a Grade 1 energy label are the most energy-efficient. With this concise and easy-to-understand label, consumers can make informed decisions in purchasing more energy-efficient products. Any person who supplies a prescribed product that does not properly bear an energy label or is not a 'listed model' under the Ordinance will commit an offence, and is liable to a fine of \$100,000. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) will inspect retail shops to ensure compliance with the legislation.

Taking the fourth phase into account, MEELS covers a total of 11 types of products, including room air conditioners, refrigerating appliances, compact fluorescent lamps, washing machines, dehumidifiers, televisions, storage type electric water heaters, induction cookers, LED lamps, gas cookers and gas instantaneous water heaters. The fourth phase of MEELS came into effect on September 1, 2023, with a transitional period of 15 months. Upon the implementation of the fourth phase, the additional potential annual energy saving is estimated to be around 570 terajoules (around 160 million kilowatt-hours), equivalent to a reduction of about 75 000 tonnes of carbon emissions per year. The total energy consumption in the residential sector covered by MEELS will substantially increase from about 50 per cent to about 80 per cent.

For more details of MEELS and information on the listed models, please visit the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/energylabel).

Revised Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces

to take effect tomorrow

The revised Code of Practice for Safety and Health at Work in Confined Spaces (CoP) will officially take effect tomorrow (November 30). The CoP was gazetted on May 31 this year, and a grace period of six months was provided to allow sufficient time for the industry to understand and prepare for the revised requirements.

During the grace period, the Labour Department (LD) has strengthened its publicity and promotions, as well as education and training, through various channels such as the LD's website, the "OSH 2.0" mobile application, and a series of talks and seminars organised with relevant organisations to facilitate the industry's better understanding of the CoP's content.

The major revisions of the CoP include the enhancement of requirements for proprietors' or contractors' supervision on confined space work; highlighting the factors for assessing whether a particular job constitutes underground pipework; adding a detailed template on the risk assessment form and listing out the setting of an air-monitoring alarm; and an update on the Permit-to-work Certificate template. New requirements have also been added to the revised CoP, such as requiring proprietors or contractors to adopt technology to record videos at the entrance and exit of the confined space throughout the entire work period to enhance monitoring relevant personnel's compliance with the safety precautions.

Meanwhile, the LD has refined the mandatory safety training courses for confined space operations to enhance the industry's understanding of common risks and its ability to mitigate these risks, which includes updating the course content, extending the course duration and shortening the validity period of the relevant safety certificates so that industry personnel will refresh their safety knowledge more frequently and stay updated on new legislative developments. The revised courses will be launched tomorrow.

A spokesman for the LD said, "After the commencement of the revised CoP, the LD will continue to conduct surprise inspections at workplaces with confined spaces from time to time to review the relevant work processes and safety precautions implemented to ensure the safety and health of workers."

The spokesman added, "The CoP has a special legal status. In criminal proceedings, if a relevant person fails to observe any provisions of this CoP, that failure may be taken by the court as a relevant factor in determining whether or not a person has breached the relevant occupational safety and health legislation."

â€‹

For more information on working in confined spaces, or to download the revised CoP, please visit the LD's new thematic website (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/news/osh_confinedspace.htm). Enquiries about the CoP can be made at 2559 2297.

Rural By-election to be held on Sunday

The Home Affairs Department (HAD) appeals to registered electors of the Ko Tong Indigenous Inhabitant Representative Election, and of the Nam Wai, Fung Yuen, Kau Lung Hang and Tseng Tau Tsuen (Upper) Resident Representative Elections to exercise their right to vote in the Rural By-election to be held this Sunday (December 1).

Fifty-eight Rural Representative vacancies are open in the by-election, and 38 valid nominations were received during the nomination period. There are two candidates running for an Indigenous Inhabitant Representative post of Ko Tong of the Sai Kung North Rural Committee; and two candidates each running for the respective Resident Representative posts of Nam Wai of the Sai Kung Rural Committee, Fung Yuen and Kau Lung Hang of the Tai Po Rural Committee and Tseng Tau Tsuen (Upper) of the Tuen Mun Rural Committee. Polling will be held for these five vacancies.

The other 28 candidates were returned uncontested to be the Indigenous Inhabitant Representatives of Pui O Lo Wai, Mang Kung Uk, Pan Long Wan, Mau Ping New Village, Kei Ling Ha San Wai, Lai Chi Chong, Pak Tam Au, Tung Sam Kei, Uk Tau, Cheung Uk Tei, Tong Sheung Tsuen, Sam Tung Uk and Sham Tseng; the Resident Representatives of Pui O Lo Wai, Sha Lo Wan, Nam Chung, San Tsuen, Shek Chung Au, Kam Tsin, Nga Yiu Ha, Pak Kong Au, Lin Au Cheng Uk, Ma Wo Tsuen, San Tsuen (Lam Tsuen), Tin Liu Ha, Sai Lau Kok and Sheung Kwai Chung; and the Kaifong Representative of Cheung Chau Market Town.

No valid nomination was received for the Indigenous Inhabitant Representative vacancies of Po Toi, Sok Kwu Wan, Wu Shek Kok, Long Ke, Pak Tam Chung, Wong Keng Tsai, To Yuen Tung and Yin Ngam, and the Resident Representative vacancies of Po Toi, Ngau Kwu Long, Luk Keng Wong Uk, Wu Shek Kok, Hoi Pong Street, Lung Mei, Ma Nam Wat, Pak Tam Chung, Ping Tun, Sai Wan, Mui Tsz Lam, Ha Yeung, Pak Sha O, Ping Chau Sha Tau, Uk Tau, Kam Shan Village and Ham Tin.

Polling will be held from noon to 7pm on December 1. Electors are required to bring along the original of their identity document or other specific alternative documents to the designated polling station as specified in the polling notice.

For further information, please visit the Rural Representative Election (RRE) website (www.had.gov.hk/rre) or call the RRE hotline at 2152 1521.

Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-boundary Ambulance Transfer in Greater Bay Area set for official launch tomorrow

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government, in collaboration with the Guangdong Provincial Government, the Shenzhen Municipal Government and the Macao SAR Government, will officially launch the one-year Pilot Scheme for Direct Cross-boundary Ambulance Transfer in the Greater Bay Area tomorrow (November 30). The first phase of the Pilot Scheme will start by arranging direct cross-boundary ambulance transfer of patients from designated sending hospitals in Shenzhen and Macao (i.e. the University of Hong Kong – Shenzhen Hospital and the Conde S. Januario Hospital of Macao) to designated public hospitals in Hong Kong.

The Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, said, "The study on the provision of land-based cross-boundary transfer for non-emergency and non-critically ill patients and the exploration of rolling out a pilot co-operation scheme for cross-boundary referral of patients between designated public hospitals were put forward in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The Chief Executive also put forward in his Policy Address last year the initiative to explore cross-boundary ambulance transfer arrangements between hospitals in the GBA. Under the staunch support and guidance of various national ministries as well as concerted efforts of the government departments of Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macao, the Pilot Scheme is set for official launch tomorrow. This marks a new height in high-quality medical collaboration and development in the GBA while addressing the earnest anticipation of residents in the GBA. The Hong Kong SAR Government will continue to deepen healthcare collaboration with other GBA cities to further boost healthcare integration within the GBA, thus building a Healthy Bay Area through joint endeavours and starting a new chapter for high-quality development in the GBA."

Under the mechanism of direct cross-boundary ambulance arrangements, upon assessment and agreement by the teams of designated cross-boundary collaborating hospitals, arrangements can be made for patients with specific clinical needs and suitable clinical conditions to be transferred directly to Hong Kong between designated hospitals in a point-to-point mode without the handover of patients between ambulances at boundary control points, thus minimising risks posed to patients during transfer.

The Pilot Scheme has a mechanism in place to avoid abuse while ensuring the safety of cross-boundary transfer. Since medical conditions and needs vary among patients, doctors at the sending hospital will assess, on a case-by-case basis, the need for the patient to have cross-boundary inter-hospital transfer for continuous treatment or recovery services, taking the patient's clinical diagnosis and actual conditions into consideration. The doctors at the sending hospital will communicate with the Major Incident Control Centre of the Hospital Authority for joint assessment, information exchange and co-

ordination with the receiving hospital to decide whether the transfer mechanism should be activated. The sending and receiving hospitals will also ensure that the patient's relatives and/or the patient have given consent to the relevant arrangements and are informed of the risks involved in the transfer.

The Hong Kong SAR Government has been in proactive discussion and close collaboration with Guangdong and Macao governments regarding the direct cross-boundary ambulance transfer arrangements. To make full preparation, governments of the three places have conducted three drills in total in August and October this year, simulating the transfer of patients under the cross-boundary ambulance arrangements.

Subject to the effectiveness and operational experience of the Pilot Scheme, governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will further consider arrangements for expanding the Scheme in its next phase.

Property owner fined over \$100,000 for persistently not complying with removal order

A property owner who persistently failed to comply with a removal order issued under the Buildings Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 123) was convicted and fined over \$100,000 at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts last week.

The case involved two unauthorised structures, with areas of about 22.9 and 4.7 square metres respectively, on the flat roofs of a residential building in Hung Shui Kiu, Yuen Long. As the unauthorised building works (UBWs) were carried out without prior approval and consent from the Buildings Department (BD), a removal order was served on the owners under section 24(1) of the BO.

Failing to comply with the removal order, the owner was prosecuted by the BD and was fined over \$11,000 upon conviction by the court. As the owner persisted in not complying with the removal order, the BD instigated prosecution again. The owner was fined \$108,070 in total by the Court, of which \$98,070 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on November 22.

A spokesman for the BD said today (November 29), "UBWs may lead to serious consequences. Owners must comply with removal orders without delay. The BD will continue to take enforcement actions and consider instigating prosecution against owners again if they persist in not complying with the orders to ensure building safety."

Failing to comply with a removal order without a reasonable excuse is a serious offence under the B0. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$200,000 and one year's imprisonment, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence continues.