

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 24) 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 March 15 to 21, one community-acquired LD case was reported, involving a male patient, aged 93 with underlying illnesses, who resided in Shun Fung House, Shun Chi Court, Kwun Tong. He passed away on March 22.

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

As of March 21 this year, 31 LD cases had been reported. In 2019 and 2018, there were 105 cases each year.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunities are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; 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 which 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.

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.

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.

Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong (Amendment) Regulation 2020 gazetted

The Government published in the Gazette today (March 24) the Compulsory

Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong (Amendment) Regulation 2020 (the Amendment Regulation). The Amendment Regulation extends the compulsory 14-day quarantine arrangements to all persons arriving from or having stayed in Macao and Taiwan, in the past 14 days prior to arrival, in addition to those arriving from the Mainland.

Together with the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) effected on March 19, 2020, the Amendment Regulation implies that all inbound travellers would be subject to a compulsory quarantine, unless exempted. This is a further measure to avoid the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Hong Kong.

The Amendment Regulation will commence at 0.00am tomorrow (March 25) and will be effective for the same period as the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) (i.e. till midnight of May 7, 2020).

Other arrangements relating to the compulsory quarantine requirement under Cap. 599C, including the exemption of certain categories of people fulfilling specific criteria by the Chief Secretary for Administration and the penalties, remain unchanged. Contravening the quarantine requirement is a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months.

The Amendment Regulation is made in accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599). Section 8 of the Ordinance empowers the Chief Executive in Council to make public health emergency regulations for the purposes of preventing, combating or alleviating the effects of a public health emergency and protecting public health.

The Government published in the Gazette on February 7, 2020, the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) to subject all persons arriving from or having stayed in the Mainland for any period during the 14 days preceding their arrival in Hong Kong, regardless of nationality and travel documents used, to a compulsory quarantine for 14 days.

In view of the proliferation of the disease and the continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, the Centre for Health Protection strongly urges members of the public to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

The Department of Health (DH) will closely monitor the situation. Any updates will be issued through the media, the Government's "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html) and the DH's webpage (www.gov.hk/ncv). Any enquiries on health information on COVID-19 may be addressed to the DH's hotline at (852) 2125 1122 (operating daily from 8am to midnight).

Missing man in Kwun Tong located

A man who went missing in Kwun Tong has been located.

Wong Ching-tong, aged 58, went missing after he was last seen on Lei Yue Mun Road on March 21 afternoon. His family made a report to Police on March 22 morning.

Police located the man on Ka Lok Street this morning (March 24).

Import of poultry meat and products from District of Aurich, State of Niedersachsen in Germany suspended

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (March 24) that in view of a notification from the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) about an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N8 avian influenza in the District of Aurich of the State of Niedersachsen in Germany, the CFS has instructed the trade to suspend the import of poultry meat and products, including poultry eggs, from the district with immediate effect to protect public health in Hong Kong.

A CFS spokesman said that Hong Kong imported about 4 780 tonnes of frozen poultry meat and 2.9 million poultry eggs from Germany last year, according to the Census and Statistics Department.

"The CFS has contacted the German authorities over the issue and will closely monitor information issued by the OIE on avian influenza outbreaks. Appropriate action will be taken in response to the development of the situation," the spokesman said.

Quarterly business receipts indices

for service industries for the fourth quarter of 2019 and the whole year of 2019

Business receipts in value terms of most of major service industries showed decreases of different magnitudes in the fourth quarter of 2019 when compared with the fourth quarter of 2018, according to the provisional figures of business receipts indices released today (March 24) by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD).

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2019 with the fourth quarter of 2018, double-digit decreases were recorded in business receipts of the accommodation services (-41.1%), retail (-22.4%), food services (-14.4%), warehousing and storage (-13.6%) and wholesale (-10.9%) industries.

On the other hand, the financing (except banking) industry recorded an increase of 9.9% in business receipts during the same period, followed by the real estate (+4.8%) industry.

Analysed by service domain, business receipts of the tourism, convention and exhibition services domain decreased by 49.9% year-on-year during the same period, while those of the computer and information technology services domain also decreased by 10.0% year-on-year.

On a seasonally adjusted quarter-to-quarter comparison, business receipts in value terms of almost all service industries recorded decreases of different magnitudes in the fourth quarter of 2019 when compared with the third quarter of 2019. In particular, business receipts of the accommodation services industry decreased by 26.0%. On the other hand, the financing (except banking) industry registered an increase of 7.0% in business receipts during the same period.

Comparing the fourth quarter of 2019 with the third quarter of 2019 and on a seasonally adjusted basis, business receipts of the tourism, convention and exhibition services domain decreased by 28.3%, whereas those of the computer and information technology services domain increased by 2.9%.

For 2019 as a whole, around half of service industries recorded year-on-year decreases in business receipts. Double-digit decreases were recorded in the accommodation services (-14.3%) and retail (-11.1%) industries. On the other hand, business receipts of the real estate industry increased by 11.1% as compared with 2018.

Analysed by service domain, business receipts of the tourism, convention and exhibition services domain decreased by 19.0%, while those of the computer and information technology services domain also decreased by 7.3% during the same period.

Commentary

A Government spokesman noted that business receipts of most major service industries declined in the fourth quarter of 2019 over a year earlier. Hard hit by the local social incidents involving violence, industries related to consumption and tourism saw sharp falls in business receipts. The plunge in business receipts of tourism, convention and exhibition services domain was the largest since the SARS episode. Business receipts of the import/export trade and wholesale industries continued to record visible declines amid shrinking trade flows. Taking 2019 as a whole, visible declines in business receipts were recorded in the consumption- and tourism-related industries as well as trade-related industries.

The spokesman further pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought tourism almost to a standstill, caused severe disruptions to a wide range of economic activities and dampened economic sentiment lately. The service industries will be subject to even greater pressure in the near term, and the exact impact will hinge on the duration and severity of the pandemic. The Government will continue to monitor the developments closely.

Further information

Table 1 presents the business receipts indices and their corresponding year-on-year rates of change in respect of selected service industries and service domains for the recent five quarters and the whole year of 2019, while Table 2 shows the corresponding quarter-to-quarter rates of change in the business receipts indices for the recent five quarters based on the seasonally adjusted series.

The revised figures of business receipts indices for the fourth quarter and the whole year of 2019 will be released at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp70.jsp?subjectID=7&tableID=093&ID=0&productType=8) and relevant publications of the C&SD starting from April 20, 2020.

Data for compiling the business receipts indices are mainly based on the Quarterly Survey of Service Industries conducted by the C&SD, supplemented by relevant data provided by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

A service domain differs from a service industry in that it comprises those economic activities which straddle different industries but are somehow related to a common theme. It may include all activities carried out by all establishments in a service industry that is closely related to the domain. For a service industry that is less closely related, however, only a portion of the establishments in the industry or even only part of the economic activities of the establishments is related to the domain. Taking the tourism, convention and exhibition services domain as an example, it includes all services of hotels and travel agents, and some (those involving visitors as customers) but not all of the services of restaurants, retailers and transport operators.

The classification of service industries follows the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification Version 2.0, which is used in various economic surveys for classifying economic units into different industry classes.

More detailed statistics are given in the report "Quarterly Business Receipts Indices for Service Industries, Fourth Quarter 2019". Users can download this publication free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp70.jsp?productCode=B1080006).

Members of the public who have enquiries about the business receipts indices may contact the Business Services Statistics Section of the C&SD (Tel: 3903 7267 or email: business-receipts@censtatd.gov.hk).