

## **DSD to provide basic and limited public services starting tomorrow**

In view of the latest developments of COVID-19, the Drainage Services Department (DSD) announced today (March 22) that it will maintain its emergency and essential public services and provide basic and limited public services to members of the public starting tomorrow (March 23) until further notice. These services include the 24-hour DSD Drainage Hotline, the inspection of drainage records and the handling of Sewage Charges/Trade Effluent Surcharge matters. The public are advised to minimise their use of the above services unless under emergency or necessary situations and note that the handling times of the above services will be longer.

Except for the 24-hour Drainage Hotline (2300 1110), all enquiry phone lines and reception services will be suspended temporarily. Inspection of drainage records, and receipt and dispatch services at the four locations below will be open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10am to noon and from 2pm to 4pm:

- 43/F, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong;
- 12/F, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon;
- 23/F, 1063 King's Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong; and
- G/F, Western Magistracy Building, 2A Pok Fu Lam Road, Hong Kong.

Drop-in boxes will be available at the above four locations and at the gate of Shatin Sewage Treatment Works outside the opening hours to receive documents.

DSD facilities will also be temporarily closed for public visits and other educational purposes until further notice.

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## **Latest arrangements on Transport Department services**

To align with the latest limited service arrangements announced by the Government to reduce social contacts and the risk of the spread of disease in the community, the Transport Department (TD) announced today (March 22) the latest arrangements of TD's services for members of the public from March 23. Details are as follows:

## Driving test services

(1) The TD's driving test centres will suspend services from March 23. All driving tests (road tests) originally scheduled for March 23 and thereafter will be suspended until further notice.

Driving test appointment service, driving test (written test Part A), taxi written test, online booking service for driving test appointments, telephone booking service for repeater early test appointments and walk-in counter services of the TD's Driving Test Appointment Office at Cheung Sha Wan will be suspended until further notice. Affected candidates will be notified individually for the rescheduling of the test dates. For enquiries about driving test appointments, please contact the Driving Test Appointment Office by telephone from 9am and 5pm from Monday to Friday.

## Licensing and related services

(2) The TD's Licensing Offices will continue to suspend walk-in counter services, but will process licensing applications submitted by applicants with scheduled appointments, by post or online (except for the direct issue of a full Hong Kong driving licence). Applicants who have made an online appointment for renewal of a full driving licence/vehicle licence, an application for transfer of ownership of a vehicle or an application for an international driving permit from March 23 and onwards can visit the Licensing Office concerned at the scheduled time. Members of the public without prior bookings may submit applications by post or online, or via the drop-in boxes placed at each Licensing Office from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday.

(3) The TD's Public Vehicles Unit, Cross Boundary Unit, Vehicle Records Office, Driving Licence Records Office and Driving Offence Points Office will continue to suspend counter services. Members of the public can submit their applications using the drop-in boxes at respective offices from 9am to 5pm from Monday to Friday or contact the relevant offices by telephone.

## Vehicle examination services

(4) The TD's Vehicle Examination Centres will continue to provide vehicle examination services for vehicles with an appointment from Monday to Friday.

As part of the anti-epidemic work, the TD has required all staff to wear masks. In view of public health considerations, members of the public entering TD's offices have to undergo on-the-spot body temperature checks arranged by the TD. Any member of the public whose body temperature is higher than 37.5 degrees Celsius or who refuses to undergo a body temperature check will be denied entry into the offices. The offices will also request members of the public to wear masks and clean their hands with alcohol-based sanitiser before entering the offices.

For enquiries, members of the public can contact the offices concerned of the TD at the following numbers:

Hong Kong Licensing Office	2804 2636
Kowloon Licensing Office	2150 7728
Kwun Tong Licensing Office	2775 6835
Sha Tin Licensing Office	2606 1468
Public Vehicles Unit	2804 2574
Driving Licence Records Office	2804 2596
Driving Offence Points Office	2804 2594
Driving Test Centre/Driving Test Appointment Office	2771 7723
Cross Boundary Unit	2543 2114
To Kwa Wan Vehicle Examination Centre	2364 7211/2333 3112
Sheung Kwai Chung Vehicle Examination Centre	2424 5215
Kowloon Bay Vehicle Examination Centre	2759 7036
New Kowloon Bay Vehicle Examination Centre	2751 8862

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## MD announcement

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Marine Department today (March 22) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported.

Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the VTC at Tel: 2233 7801.

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# Government announces enhanced measures for disease control

In response to the worsening situation of the novel coronavirus infection due to the rapid increase in the number of imported cases from abroad, major members of the Steering Committee cum Command Centre chaired by the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, yesterday (March 21) met the four experts of the expert advisory panel for the second time this week. They decided after the meeting to implement a number of enhanced measures to reduce the risk of a large-scale outbreak in the community.

## Strengthen testing programme for people returning Hong Kong

Taking into account that most of the recent confirmed cases are either imported cases and cases related to their close contacts or patients with a travel history during the incubation period, the Hospital Authority (HA) and the Department of Health (DH) will enhance tests for people returning to Hong Kong from overseas, with an aim to identify the patients early and minimise the risk of community transmission. The HA and the DH will fully utilise all resources for testing and adopt a risk-based approach to arrange more tests as far as possible. This includes providing more arrivals with specimen containers at the Hong Kong International Airport to require them to collect their deep throat saliva sample by themselves at residence in accordance with the instructions for testing. If a sample tests positive, the Centre for Health Protection will arrange for the person concerned to receive treatment as early as possible.

## Adjustments to public services and temporary closures of some facilities

In view of the latest situation, the Government will once again adjust public services and make special work arrangements for civil servants to reduce social contacts. Starting next Monday, all government departments will provide essential, emergency and limited public services only. Enterprises are urged to make flexible work arrangements for employees to tie in with the Government strategy to fight the disease. Some of the public facilities that reopened earlier will be temporarily closed from next Monday, including leisure venues of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, public facilities of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, and community halls and community centres of the Home Affairs Department. Relevant authorities will make separate announcements on arrangements of public services and the opening of public facilities.

The Government hopes that members of the public will stay vigilant, avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong, stay at home as much as possible and maintain an appropriate social distance from other people, especially refraining from attending such activities as meal gatherings or other gatherings. As some recent confirmed cases were suspected to be infected at bars, fitness centres and cinemas, the Government urges members

of the public to avoid going to these premises which may be of relatively high-risk and appeals to the relevant sectors to make adjustments for the sake of public health, lowering the risk of infection of customers.

#### Deferral of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examination

To protect students' health, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examination scheduled to start on March 27 will be deferred to April 24 and is expected to be finished on May 25, and the speaking examinations of both Chinese and English language subjects will be cancelled. In addition, classes of all schools will remain suspended until further notice.

#### Stringent enforcement actions against contravention of quarantine order

Implementing the compulsory quarantine for people returning to Hong Kong from overseas is crucial to the prevention and control of the infection. The relevant departments will step up inspections and adopt "zero tolerance" towards those contravening the quarantine order. Immediate prosecution will be taken without any warning. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. The Government strongly urges people under quarantine to exercise self-discipline to abide by the quarantine order, and not to defy the law.

#### Strengthening disease prevention at residential care homes for the elderly

As the elderly are of higher risk in contracting the disease, the Government will help residential care homes for the elderly and residential care homes for persons with disabilities to strengthen disease prevention. The Chief Executive has earlier on decided to provide one million surgical masks monthly to these institutions for use by the nursing staff, and that will now be doubled to 2 million monthly. In addition, the Social Welfare Department will arrange the spraying of an anti-bacteria coating developed by an innovation and technology team of a local university in the institutions to strengthen the prevention of the virus.

"More than seven million Hong Kong people have been fighting the disease together in the past two months, enabling Hong Kong to sail through the epidemic wave after wave. But the situation of increasing imported cases has presented Hong Kong with a challenge which is more severe than any moment in the past two months. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government will continue to tackle the disease in accordance with the principles of making prompt responses, staying alert and working in an open and transparent manner. I also urge members of the public to continue the efforts together to win the fight against the epidemic for Hong Kong," Mrs Lam said.

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## Transcript of remarks of press conference (with photo/video)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, held a press conference this afternoon (March 21). Also joining were the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr Law Chi-kwong; the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan; the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung; the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, Mr Patrick Nip; the Director of Health, Dr Constance Chan; and the Chief Executive of the Hospital Authority, Dr Tony Ko. Following is the transcript of remarks of the press conference.

Reporter: Chief Executive, you just said that the number of overseas visitors has dropped to a low point, but why can't the Government take the extra step to bring the number to zero by closing the border completely, namely to bar non-Hong Kong residents from coming into Hong Kong? And secondly, there's been a lot of concerns about the current home quarantine arrangement for people returning from overseas with many saying that it is not stringent enough. So does the Government have any plans to use some hotels as designated quarantine centres or use other places to accommodate the tens of thousands of returnees? And also you talked about, just now the Health Secretary, Sophia Chan, talked about providing guidelines for the hotel staff but how do you make sure that the hotels will comply with the guidelines? Will you consider stationing health experts and law enforcement officers at the hotels? And to the Education Secretary, if the outbreak continues or even worsens, will the Government consider cancelling this year's DSE exams?

Chief Executive: There are at least four questions. I'll answer the first and then invite Sophia to deal with the next two and perhaps Kevin to answer the questions about DSE examinations.

Throughout this process of tackling the coronavirus infection, the Hong Kong SAR Government has been adopting measures based on scientific evidence and statistics. We try not to yield to slogan-type of demands because that would not be the preferred approach. It's exactly the same reason why I appointed at the very beginning this panel of experts to guide us in our work. At every stage, whether it is worries about infection coming from the Mainland or now infection coming from abroad, we have adopted very decisive measures to reduce as much as possible the admission of non-Hong Kong residents. But we have to strike a balance. There will be some genuine needs arising from this sort of restrictions, which we need to cater for. I showed you some figures, which is equally the situation in early February when we adopted that compulsory 14-day quarantine for all arrivals from Mainland. Similarly, now we have this 14-day quarantine arrangement for all arrivals from all overseas countries. The impact is very significant and very effective. The numbers of arrivals from these countries who are non-Hong Kong residents have dropped to a very low level, and I have further analysed for you that amongst the very low level, there are some very genuine cases, like Macao residents who have to use the Hong Kong International Airport to go

home. When Hong Kong people want to come back because of the pandemic situation in all parts of the world, Macao residents also want to go back to Macao. This is where our aviation hub and the Hong Kong International Airport is fulfilling that purpose.

And secondly, we mustn't forget that Hong Kong is an international city. We have a very large population of expatriates, and by status these expatriates are Hong Kong residents. They are living here, working here. So they will have family members who for one reason or another, they need to come. To deny all entry of non-Hong Kong residents will give rise to all sorts of problems, for example, one of the so-called non-Hong Kong resident case confirmed, later on we discovered it's actually the spouse of a Hong Kong resident who has also been confirmed. This spouse could not be denied entry even if there is a ban because this is a matter of human rights and humanitarian grounds. So it's much better to have a channel, but a well-controlled and regulated channel for this very small number of non-Hong Kong residents to continue to come into Hong Kong. That's point number two.

Point number three is, if we look at the figures of the confirmed cases amongst the about 300 by now, my data is there are only a few non-Hong Kong residents, discounting the first wave of Wuhan tourists coming into Hong Kong. So there is no strong basis for going for very drastic measures in order to achieve the objective.

Secretary for Food and Health: Thank you for your question. About the new quarantine order, under the Regulation, relevant person during the quarantine period will be (put under) quarantine in a place assigned by an authorised officer, or if an authorised officer considers it prudent and appropriate in the circumstances of a case, in a place nominated by the person. When the quarantine order is made against a person, that means by default most of these people will put their homes as the designated place. Many people would choose home to be their place of quarantine. Occasionally, we understand there are people who have chosen hotels as their place of quarantine, that is accepted by this law. We also understand that in the market, actually there are hotels now offering packages or 14-day quarantine packages for some of the people. (The packages) are put in the market. They have different packages to provide food and also other services in the hotels. We also understand there are people who have already subscribed to such services. Obviously this is commercial operation. As far as the guideline for the hotels is concerned, it is a guideline issued by the Centre for Health Protection. It is a guideline of good practice, not only for the people (under quarantine) themselves as preventive measures, but it also serves as a general guideline to the hotel management. For example, the staff should wear a surgical mask and maintain good personal hygiene, etc. The preventive measures are for the hotel management as well as advice given to the hotels upon, for examples, reception staff, guests and also guests put under compulsory quarantine orders. As far as guests with respiratory symptoms are concerned, they will also give advice to those guests to seek medical advice immediately. And also, (advice on) cleaning, as well as disinfection of the environment will be given where there is a suspected or confirmed case. It is a very detailed guideline. Of course, it is a good practice for hotels. The

Centre for Health Protection has already been in touch with the Tourism Commission and also the trade, so that it can make known to them this guideline so that they can follow in case there are people who choose to quarantine in their hotels.

Secretary for Education: For the DSE examination, we all know that this is a very important examination for our secondary students. And I am sure many of them have spent months or years in the preparation. So I believe most of them would not like to have their efforts wasted if we do not have the examination to proceed as scheduled. But at the same time, safety of course is also our concern. So we would closely monitor the situation and also take the necessary measures to ensure that the examination would be held in a controlled and safe environment.

Reporter: Chief Executive, do you think the Government perhaps has sent the wrong message to society in scrapping work from home for civil servants earlier, since many private firms actually follow the Government's work arrangement quite closely? And also, if Hong Kong is to experience a community-level outbreak, will you consider more stringent measures in using the law to perhaps shut down premises that may attract crowds, such as bars and cinemas, or perhaps put a curfew in place? And thirdly, about the zero tolerance for people who violate their quarantine orders, can you explain what would happen if the Police, say on the street, were to find somebody who should be at home under quarantine and have left their premises? What will the Police do at that instance and what do you mean by zero tolerance? Because in earlier cases, the Police have found people violated quarantine orders and gave them two or three chances before they were prosecuted. Is that still a fair enforcement of the law? Thank you.

Chief Executive: Thank you for the three questions. First of all, as I have said at the very beginning of our anti-epidemic work, we have to adjust our policies in accordance with the changing circumstances and in those adjustments we have to act fast and decisively. It is only natural that as the circumstances change then of course we have to adopt different measures.

I said in my opening remarks that the 7.5 million Hong Kong people have effectively and safely sailed through two waves of epidemic. The first wave was the worries of transmissions from Mainland, so we have put in a lot of measures. You can see from the statistics that actually the last Mainland-related infection case happened a long time ago now – it's in February, early February. The second wave was the local transmissions, with those clusters arising from dinners and other things. Now we are facing the third wave. It is only natural that when we sail through a wave, of course we have suppression, and then towards the end of that wave, we will have to relax a bit. Otherwise, we'll not be able to sustain. You imagine if the Government continues from the end of January, that is after the Chinese New Year, to stop providing services to the public – the postal services, licensing services, approval of building plans – what will happen now? But in light of the changing circumstances and this most difficult and challenging wave arising from a surge in the global situation and the large number of returnees, then we have to adjust and go back to measures which will ensure

more social distancing. That's exactly the reason behind it.

Now, as far as more draconian measures to use the law to ban this and that, or to cease operation, again my answer is the same logic. We will have to look at and monitor the situation very closely – people's behaviour, the co-operation of enterprises – and if we do need to act that decisively, we will not shy away. That's why throughout the process we have already made four pieces of regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance.

As far as zero tolerance, I think this reflects the aspirations of the community. The community, i.e. the 7.5 million population, together through their joint efforts, have resisted this community transmission and ensure that Hong Kong's confirmed cases, both in terms of absolute numbers and in terms of incidence per one million population, are relatively low when compared to other places all over the world. Hong Kong people would not like this situation to be undermined by individuals who refuse to abide by the quarantine order. So the time has come for us again to be very decisive and adopt a zero-tolerance approach. Previously, where cases were discovered to have left home, we will give them a warning and the second time we will send them to the quarantine centre. But I am now saying and telling those individuals on the quarantine order, if we find you on the street when you should be at home under quarantine order, then immediately we will prosecute, which means that the policemen will take evidence and then will put it through the Department of Justice as usual for prosecution. Thank you.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the transcript.)

