

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (May 10) released the latest grading of water quality for 38 gazetted beaches that are open for swimming and one non-gazetted beach (i.e. Discovery Bay*).

Sixteen beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1), 21 as Fair (Grade 2) and two as Poor (Grade 3).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Deep Water Bay Beach	Repulse Bay Beach
Discovery Bay	Shek O Beach
Hap Mun Bay Beach	South Bay Beach
Hung Shing Yeh Beach	St Stephen's Beach
Kwun Yam Beach	Stanley Main Beach
Lo So Shing Beach	Tong Fuk Beach
Lower Cheung Sha Beach	Trio Beach
Pui O Beach	Upper Cheung Sha Beach

Grade 2 beaches are:

Anglers' Beach	Golden Beach
Approach Beach	Kadoorie Beach
Big Wave Bay Beach	Kiu Tsui Beach
Butterfly Beach	Lido Beach
Cafeteria New Beach	Ma Wan Tung Wan Beach
Cafeteria Old Beach	Middle Bay Beach
Casam Beach	Silver Mine Bay Beach
Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach	Silverstrand Beach
Chung Hom Kok Beach	Ting Kau Beach
Clear Water Bay First Beach	Turtle Cove Beach
Clear Water Bay Second Beach	

Grade 3 beaches are:

Castle Peak Beach	Hoi Mei Wan Beach
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* Discovery Bay is a non-gazetted beach without lifeguard service.

Compared with the grading released last week, Chung Hom Kok Beach and Kiu Tsui Beach have been changed from Grade 1 to Grade 2, and Castle Peak Beach and Hoi Mei Wan Beach from Grade 2 to Grade 3.

"The changes are generally within the normal range of fluctuation of the bacteriological water quality of the beaches," an EPD spokesman said.

Under the present grading system, beaches are classified into four grades according to the level of E. coli in the water. Grades are calculated on the basis of the geometric mean of the E. coli counts on the five most recent sampling occasions.

While the ratings represent the general water quality at the beaches, the EPD spokesman reminded members of the public that water quality could be temporarily affected during and after periods of heavy rain. Bathers should avoid swimming at beaches for up to three days after a storm or heavy rainfall.

A summary of beach grades is published weekly before the weekend. The latest beach grades based on the most current data may be obtained from the department's website on Beach Water Quality (www.epd.gov.hk/epd/beach) or the beach hotline, 2511 6666.

Granting of Stored Value Facility licences

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (May 10) that the Monetary Authority has granted Stored Value Facility (SVF) licences to the following SVF issuers under the Payment Systems and Stored Value Facilities Ordinance:

SVF Licensee	SVF Licence Number	Licence Effective Date
Yintran Group Holdings Limited	SVF0014	May 10, 2019
Geoswift Cards Services Limited	SVF0015	May 10, 2019

Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, Mr Howard Lee, said, "The SVF

industry has been growing since the implementation of the SVF licensing regime in 2016. We hope the existing as well as the new licensees will continue to launch new services to bring more convenience and choices to consumers and merchants, and to promote diversity in the payment ecosystem of Hong Kong."

There are currently 15 non-bank SVF licensees including the above two, and three licensed banks are also operating SVFs. The latest SVF licensees list is set out in the "Register of Stored Value Facility Licensees" on the HKMA website

(URL: www.hkma.gov.hk/eng/key-functions/international-financial-centre/regulatory-regime-for-svf-and-rps/regulation-of-svf/register-of-svf-licensees.shtml).

HAD steps up enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses during Labour Day holidays (with photos)

In response to the Labour Day holidays, the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) stepped up enforcement actions against unlicensed guesthouses from late April to early May by conducting day and night surprise inspections and decoy operations at tourist accommodation hotspots. The HAD also launched large-scale inter-departmental joint operations during the holidays to combat unlicensed guesthouses and ensure the safety of lodgers as well as the general public.

A spokesman for the HAD today (May 10) said, "The OLA inspected a total of 246 premises in Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories in the operations. Prosecution will be instituted by the OLA immediately if there is sufficient evidence that the premises concerned are involved in the operation of unlicensed guesthouses. OLA officers also visited a number of private residential estates and buildings, and posted advisory notices in the common areas of the buildings to alert visitors that there were no licensed guesthouses in those buildings. OLA officers also distributed leaflets to appeal to residents to provide information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to the OLA."

Having regard to unlicensed guesthouses soliciting lodgers via online platforms, the OLA has strengthened its intelligence collection by forming a dedicated team to browse web pages, mobile applications, social media, discussion fora, blogs, etc, to track down suspected unlicensed guesthouse activities. The OLA's law enforcement officers will initiate follow-up investigation when information on unlicensed guesthouses is found.

The spokesman stressed, "Operating an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and it can lead to imprisonment as well as a criminal record. Upon conviction, an offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000, two years' imprisonment and a fine of \$20,000 for each day during which the offence continues. In 2018, the OLA conducted over 15 250 inspections and instigated 159 prosecutions, among which 140 were convicted so far, including 37 cases solicited via online platforms."

Apart from conducting special operations during festive seasons, the OLA continues to combat unlicensed guesthouses held out via online platforms through public education, such as broadcasting Announcements in the Public Interest on TV and radio. Starting from the end of March this year, the OLA also conducted publicity through major Internet search engines on the Mainland and overseas to facilitate tourists' access to the information provided by the OLA in the course of planning their trips, so that they can make use of the search functions on OLA's website to distinguish whether the guesthouse reserved is licensed or not.

Tourists and members of the public should report any suspected unlicensed guesthouses to the OLA by the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".





Employer fined for violation of safety legislation

The Scout Association of Hong Kong was fined \$20,000 at Shatin Magistrates' Courts today (May 10) for violation of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance. The prosecution was launched by the Labour Department.

The case involved a fatal accident that occurred on August 26, 2018 at a single-storey hostel at a scout activity centre in Tai Po. A worker fell from a foldable wooden ladder to the ground while he was carrying out air-conditioner replacement work at the hostel. He was admitted to hospital but passed away the following day.

Progress in handling of banking complaints by HKMA

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (May 10) the progress made in its handling of banking complaints received as at end-April 2019. Banking complaints include cases concerning general banking services and conduct-related issues.

In April 2019, 169 cases were received and the handling of 177 cases was completed. As at end-April, the handling of 437 cases was in progress.

A table summarising the progress made in the handling of banking complaints by the HKMA is attached.