

First batch of convictions secured under Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance with four REE sellers fined

Ask Global Computer Limited, Mobile Computer Land Limited, Mr. Computer (H.K.) Limited and Hisense (Hong Kong) Company Limited were fined a total of \$10,000 today (February 1) and in January at Eastern Magistrates' Courts and Fanling Magistrates' Courts for contravening the Product Eco-responsibility Ordinance (PERO). These are the first four regulated electrical equipment (REE) sellers to be successfully prosecuted by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) for contravening the PERO after relevant clauses of the Producer Responsibility Scheme on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment came into effect on August 1 last year. In addition to the above cases, four other sellers suspected of violating the PERO are scheduled for hearing in March.

An EPD spokesman said that enforcement officers conducted an inspection at the Hong Kong Computer and Communications Festival last August and received a report from a customer claiming that Mr. Computer (H.K.) Limited had failed to notify him in writing about the arrangement and terms of the free statutory removal service during his purchase of a printer. Separately, EPD enforcement officers monitored the operations of online sales platforms of REE. It was found that Ask Global Computer Limited, Mobile Computer Land Limited and Hisense (Hong Kong) Company Limited were suspected of charging customers for the statutory removal service and failed to provide information to the EPD for investigation before the deadline without reasonable explanation. The four sellers were prosecuted by the EPD for contravening the PERO.

The spokesman reminded all REE sellers that they must proactively inform consumers about the provision of free statutory removal service by sellers. They should also display written statements and provide details of the removal terms to their consumers. They must also have a removal service plan endorsed by the EPD, arrange for consumers a free removal service to collect the same type of waste equipment, provide a recycling label and a receipt containing the prescribed wording on the recycling levies when distributing REE, and keep a record of each request for removal service for one year. They should also provide information to the EPD as requested to facilitate the department's investigation on suspected non-compliance cases.

The EPD will continue to monitor the compliance situation of REE sellers, including physical shops and online sales platforms, and take stringent enforcement actions against sellers suspected of violating the PERO. Under the PERO, first-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$5,000 to \$100,000. A maximum fine of \$10,000 to \$200,000 may be imposed on second or subsequent convictions. Any person who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with a requirement properly made of him by an authorised officer under the PERO, for example to provide requested information for

investigation before a deadline, also commits an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000.

GFIN invites applications for testing innovative products

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

The Global Financial Innovation Network (GFIN) – a group of 29 international organisations including the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) – is inviting applications from firms wishing to test innovative financial products, services or business models across more than one jurisdiction.

The GFIN is an international network of organisations committed to supporting financial innovation in the interests of consumers. The network was proposed in August 2018, building on the relevant organisations' earlier proposal to create a global sandbox.

The international regulators and bodies have now launched a pilot for firms that wish to test innovative products and services across international markets, and have agreed to announce the pilot in their respective jurisdictions. The pilot tests will provide a more efficient way for innovative firms to interact with regulators across the world, as they look to scale new ideas.

Mr Howard Lee, Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA, said, "As one of the founding contributors of the GFIN, the HKMA is delighted to see the formal establishment of the initiative, which would foster closer collaboration between financial regulators. Our participation in the cross-border testing workstream demonstrates our commitment to facilitating cross-border regulatory collaboration on financial innovation. We look forward to working with other regulators and creating a conducive environment for firms to trial cross-border solutions."

Firms interested in applying to take part in the pilot cross-border tests should review the list of participating regulators and submit an application before the deadline February 28, 2019.

The GFIN has, in addition, finalised its terms of reference for governance and membership of the group. The GFIN welcomes formal expressions of interest from regulators and international organisations interested in joining. There is no deadline for these applications.

Details of the GFIN, its member organisations and the list of regulators supporting the pilot test can be found in Annex.

Grading of beach water quality released

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (February 1) released the latest grading of water quality for four gazetted beaches which are open all year round for swimming.

Four beaches were rated as Good (Grade 1).

Grade 1 beaches are:

Clear Water Bay Second Beach
Golden Beach
Repulse Bay Beach
Silverstrand Beach

Compared with the grading released last week, there was no change in the grading for these beaches.

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, an 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.

Co-ordination measures drawn up for visitors to Hong Kong during Chinese New Year Golden Week

The Tourism Commission, in co-operation with relevant government

departments, major tourist attractions, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), has drawn up measures to cope with the tourist flow between Hong Kong and the Mainland during the Chinese New Year Golden Week (February 4 to 10), a Government spokesman said today (February 1).

Relevant government departments will strengthen manpower at all control points and co-ordinate transport and cross-boundary services during the Chinese New Year Golden Week.

The Inter-departmental Joint Command Centre set up by the Immigration Department, the Police, the Customs and Excise Department (Customs) and other relevant departments will be activated during the period to monitor the situation at each land control point, as well as to maintain close liaison with Mainland counterparts and take contingency actions where necessary.

The Tourism Commission will maintain effective communication with the tourism authorities in Guangdong and Shenzhen through the mechanism of information exchange and emergency handling for Golden Weeks.

"It is expected that the passenger traffic from February 4 to 10 will be heavier than usual. To avoid congestion during the morning and evening peak hours at various boundary control points, we urge Mainland visitors and local residents to cross the boundary during less busy hours," the spokesman said.

To assist visitors in planning their trips, the Immigration Department will upload the daily arrival figures of all control points to its website (www.immd.gov.hk) from February 5 to 11. Such information will also be hyperlinked to the HKTB's website (www.discoverhongkong.com) for visitors' reference. In addition, visitors may check the estimated waiting time at all land boundary control points via the Immigration Mobile Application, which can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple App Store (supports iOS version 9.0 or above) and Google Play (supports Android version 5.0 or above).

Under the co-ordination of the Tourism Commission, major tourist attractions will extend their opening hours and put in place crowd control measures and contingency arrangements during the Chinese New Year Golden Week. The Tourism Commission, in collaboration with the TIC, will also appeal to travel agents, shops and restaurants serving Mainland inbound tour groups to implement appropriate measures for the orderly management of tourist and coach flows.

As regards consumer education, the Tourism Commission and the HKTB have deployed staff to distribute to Mainland visitors souvenirs or leaflets printed with education messages at various control points and popular tourist destinations respectively, so as to enhance their awareness of protecting their own rights. An advisory note on consumer rights for Mainland inbound tour group visitors has also been uploaded to the website of the Tourism Commission for Mainland visitors' reference.

To protect inbound tour group visitors' rights, the TIC will continue to

enforce a series of regulatory measures on the trade's arrangements for receiving Mainland inbound tour groups, which include requiring Hong Kong travel agents to register with the TIC the itineraries of the Mainland inbound tour groups that they receive together with proof of accommodation within a specified period. During the Chinese New Year Golden Week, the TIC will deploy additional manpower for conducting inspections in districts where relatively more registered shops are located and offer immediate assistance to visitors and tourist guides. In addition, Customs and the Police will step up inspection of retail shops serving Mainland inbound tour groups so as to combat unfair trade practices such as coerced shopping.

The Tourism Commission has provided the hotlines of the relevant local organisations to Mainland inbound group visitors via the tourism authorities in Guangdong and Shenzhen. During the Chinese New Year Golden Week, in case of any emergency, Mainland inbound tour group visitors, tour escorts accompanying the tour groups and local tourist guides can seek assistance from the TIC by calling its service hotline 2807 0707 (operating from 9am to midnight). For enquiries or complaints, visitors can call the HKTG's hotline 2508 1234 (operating from 9am to 6pm) or the Consumer Council's hotline 2929 2222 (operating from 9am to 5.30pm).

General out-patient clinic services during Chinese New Year holidays

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (February 1) announced that in view of the increased demand during the winter surge in public hospitals, the general out-patient clinic (GOPC) services will be enhanced around the Chinese New Year. The overall quota will increase by about 3 900 during the week of the Chinese New Year and the week after (February 4 to 17), while one more GOPC will provide public holiday clinic service on February 7, so that 14 clinics in total (see table below) will remain open to meet the service needs of the public during the long holidays and alleviate the service pressure of Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments.

The Chairman of the HA's Coordinating Committee (A&E), Dr Li Kai-ming, said A&E Departments of public hospitals will also remain open as usual to serve the public with urgent medical needs during the Chinese New Year holidays. He said he also expected that attendance in A&E Departments will gradually increase.

"The extended three-day Chinese New Year holidays will start next Tuesday. Our previous experience tells us that the service demand will increase rapidly in the latter part of the holiday and also on the first

working day following the extended holiday. The latest A&E waiting time information is available on the HA website and the 'HA Touch' mobile app. As an alternative, non-urgent patients are advised to consider seeking consultation at general out-patient clinics or primary clinics of private doctors," Dr Li said.

Dr Li also took the opportunity to remind people travelling outside Hong Kong during the holidays to avoid contact with birds or poultry and to reveal their travel history to healthcare staff when seeking medical consultation. The general public should adopt a healthy lifestyle such as covering the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing, maintaining proper hand hygiene and putting on a mask when developing symptoms of respiratory infections in order to avoid further spread of disease.

The HA spokesperson added that the public can access the "Winter Surge Designated Webpage" through the HA Homepage (www.ha.org.hk/goto/wintersurge/en) and the "HA Touch" mobile app to understand the key service statistics, including A&E waiting time information, A&E attendance and the medical in-patient bed occupancy rate. Moreover, they can get information on private and charity group healthcare services during the Chinese New Year from the "One-stop medical services information portal during Chinese New Year Holidays" in the designated webpage. Members of the public are welcome to call the HA Infoline 2882 4866 for information on holiday general out-patient clinic services.

The HA wishes every member of the public a healthy and prosperous Year of the Pig.

Public Holiday Clinic Services

District	Name of clinic	Telephone number for booking	General enquiries
Hong Kong Island	Shau Kei Wan Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0077	2560 0211
	Violet Peel General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0000	3553 3116
	Aberdeen Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3543 5011	2555 0381
	* Central District Health Centre General Out-patient Clinic	3543 5033	2545 1485
Kowloon	Kwun Tong Community Health Centre	3157 0687	2389 0331
	Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital Family Medicine Clinic	3157 0118	2354 2267
	Robert Black General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0113	2383 3311
	Yau Ma Tei Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0880	2272 2400

New Territories	Lady Trench General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0107	2614 4789
	Lek Yuen General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0972	2692 8730
	Shek Wu Hui Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0965	2670 0211
	Tai Po Jockey Club General Out-patient Clinic	3157 0906	2664 2039
	Tuen Mun Clinic	3543 0886	2452 9111
	Yuen Long Jockey Club Health Centre	3543 5007	2443 8511

* Central District Health Centre General Out-patient Clinic will provide public holiday clinic services on February 7 (Thursday).

Consultation Hours:

February 5 to 7 (Tuesday to Thursday)
9am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm