

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 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, and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From September 16 to 22, five community-acquired LD cases were reported. They are:

1. A male patient, aged 68 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Fairview Court, 5-13 Tsat Tsz Mui Road, North Point;
2. A male patient, aged 50 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Pik Wai House, Shek Pai Wan Estate, Southern District;
3. A male patient, aged 63 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Tak Yue House, Hau Tak Estate, Tseung Kwan O;
4. A male patient, aged 64 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Ka Choi Lane, Tuen Mun; and
5. A male patient, aged 68 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yan Lok House, Tin Yan Estate, Tin Shui Wai.

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

As of September 22, 77 LD cases had been reported in 2018. In 2017 and 2016, there were 72 and 75 cases respectively.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity 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 get 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:

1. Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
2. Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
3. If using these devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not tap water. Also, clean and maintain them regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water. 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;
- 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 the 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 medical advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile (not distilled or tap) water to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain them 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. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change the water daily; and
- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
 1. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
 2. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
 3. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
 4. 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.

Sale of Home Ownership Scheme Flats 2018 to invite additional applications from October 3

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

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) announced today (September 24) that the Sale of Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) Flats 2018 will invite additional applications starting from October 3. Eligible applicants who have not applied previously may submit applications from October 3 to October 16. Application forms and application guides will be available from September 26.

All valid applications received during the previous application period from March 29 to April 11 will remain valid. These applicants are not required to submit fresh applications.

Only one balloting will be held, tentatively in November, to determine the priority of flat selection for different categories of applicants from the two application periods.

"Previous applicants who wish to change their registered family composition should apply for cancellation of their previous applications to the HOS Sales Unit before submitting fresh applications. If not, both the previous and newly submitted applications will be considered as duplicates and cancelled accordingly," a spokesman for the HA said.

"Should any person be found to be included in more than one application form (including green form and white form), the applications will be considered as duplicates and all related applications will be null and void. The application fees paid are non-refundable and non-transferrable," the spokesman said.

Previous applicants who choose to cancel their previous applications can apply for cancellation. The application fees paid will be refunded. Applicants must complete the "Application Form of Cancellation of Application and Refund of Application Fee" and submit it to HOS Sales Unit on or before October 16. This application form can be obtained at the HA Customer Service Centre (HACSC) in Lok Fu or downloaded from the website: www.housingauthority.gov.hk/hos/2018.

The HA's Subsidised Housing Committee, at its respective meetings in June and July, approved the re-opening of application to invite additional applications, the revised selling prices and sales arrangements for Sale of HOS Flats 2018, and the new alienation restrictions.

Under the Sale of HOS Flats 2018, 4,431 flats in three new HOS developments, i.e. Hoi Lok Court in Cheung Sha Wan, Kai Long Court in Kai Tak and Yu Tai Court in Tung Chung, will be offered for sale.

The HA will provide a sales leaflet indicating the revised selling price ranges of the HOS flats and new alienation restrictions from seven days before the commencement to the end of the re-opened application period. Sales brochures and full price lists will be available for collection by the public at the HACSC and on the designated websites of the three HOS developments seven days before commencement of flat selection.

Soft copies of the sales leaflet, additional information, latest drafts of Deeds of Mutual Covenant and aerial photographs of the developments will also be uploaded to the designated websites of the three HOS developments. "Members of the public are encouraged to make good use of the website for the Sale of HOS Flats 2018 (www.housingauthority.gov.hk/hos/2018), where they can browse the sales materials and view the virtual show flat walkthrough videos," the spokesman said. Soft copies of the application form and application guide will also be available for viewing and downloading from the HA/Housing Department's website.

"The application period will run from 8am on October 3 until 7pm on October 16. Applications submitted before the application period or after the closing time will not be accepted," the spokesman said.

Project information, approved building plans, Outline Zoning Plans, land grants, latest drafts of Deeds of Mutual Covenant, aerial photographs, building models, virtual show flat walkthrough videos and doll houses produced by the building information modelling technique and more will be displayed at the HACSC from 8am to 7pm from September 26 to October 16 for inspection by the public. Copies of the sales leaflets and the application forms and application guides for the Sale of HOS Flats 2018 will be available at the HACSC for collection by the public. During this period, these documents will also be available for collection by the public within office hours at the estate offices and District Tenancy Management Offices of the HA, rental estate offices of the Hong Kong Housing Society, the Home Affairs Enquiry Centres of the Home Affairs Department and the Sham Shui Po Housing Information Centre.

Members of the public may visit the HACSC from 8am to 7pm during the application period or call the HA's 24-hour Sales Hotline on 2712 8000 for application details on the HOS developments.

Two illegal workers jailed

Two Vietnamese illegal workers were jailed by Shatin Magistrates' Courts

on September 22.

During operation "Twilight" on September 20, Immigration Department (ImmD) investigators raided a restaurant in Hung Hom. Two female Vietnamese illegal workers, aged 50 and 47, were arrested. When intercepted they were performing kitchen work and dish washing duty respectively. Upon identity checking, one of them produced for inspection a recognisance form issued by the ImmD, which prohibits her from taking employment. Further investigation revealed that she was non-refoulement claimant. The other woman was an illegal immigrant. She was also suspected of using and being in possession of a forged identity card. Two employers suspected of employing the illegal workers were arrested and the investigation is ongoing.

The two illegal workers were charged at Shatin Magistrates' Courts on September 22 with taking employment after landing in Hong Kong unlawfully and remaining in Hong Kong without the authority of the Director of Immigration or while being a person in respect of whom a removal order or deportation order was in force. They pleaded guilty to the charges and they were sentenced to 15 months' imprisonment. In addition, one of them was also charged with one count of using a forged Hong Kong identity card and one count of possessing a forged Hong Kong identity card. She was sentenced to 15 months and 12 months' imprisonment respectively. All sentences are to run concurrently, making a total of 15 months' imprisonment.

The ImmD spokesman warned that, as stipulated in section 38AA of the Immigration Ordinance, illegal immigrants or people who are the subject of a removal order or a deportation order are prohibited from taking any employment, whether paid or unpaid, or establishing or joining in any business. Offenders are liable upon conviction to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and up to three years' imprisonment. The Court of Appeal has issued a guideline ruling that a sentence of 15 months' imprisonment should be applied in such cases.

The spokesman also warned that it is an offence to use or possess a forged Hong Kong identity card or an identity card relating to another person. Offenders are liable to prosecution and a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and up to 10 years' imprisonment.

The spokesman reiterated that it is a serious offence to employ people who are not lawfully employable. The maximum penalty is imprisonment for three years and a fine of \$350,000. The High Court has laid down sentencing guidelines that the employer of an illegal worker should be given an immediate custodial sentence. According to the court sentencing, employers must take all practicable steps to determine whether a person is lawfully employable prior to employment. Apart from inspecting a prospective employee's identity card, the employer has the explicit duty to make enquiries regarding the person and ensure that the answers would not cast any reasonable doubt concerning the lawful employability of the person. The court will not accept failure to do so as a defence in proceedings. It is also an offence if an employer fails to inspect the job seeker's valid travel document if the job seeker does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card.

The maximum penalty for failing to inspect such a document is imprisonment for one year and a fine of \$150,000.

Under the existing mechanism, the ImmD will, as a standard procedure, conduct initial screening on vulnerable persons, including illegal workers, illegal immigrants, sex workers and foreign domestic helpers, who are arrested during any operation, with a view to ascertaining whether they are trafficking in persons (TIP) victims. When any TIP indicator is revealed in the initial screening, the officers will conduct a full debriefing and identification by using a standardised checklist to ascertain the presence of TIP elements, such as threat and coercion in the recruitment phase and the nature of exploitation. Identified TIP victims will be provided with various forms of support and assistance, including urgent interference, medical services, counselling, shelter, temporary accommodation and other supporting services. The ImmD calls on TIP victims to report crimes to the relevant departments.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, September 24, 2018 is 104.8 (up 0.2 against last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, September 22, 2018 was 104.6 (up 0.2 against last Friday's index).

Task Force on Land Supply submits preliminary observations to Chief Executive

The Task Force on Land Supply (Task Force) submitted its preliminary observations drawn from the Public Engagement Exercise of the Task Force today (September 24).

The relevant letter from the Chairman of the Task Force, Mr Stanley Wong, to the Chief Executive is at Appendix.