

Labour Department urges employers to comply with Supplementary Labour Scheme requirements

The Labour Department (LD) today (July 16) urged employers hiring imported workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS) to comply with the law of Hong Kong (in particular the Employment Ordinance and the Immigration Ordinance), as well as the requirements of the SLS and the Standard Employment Contract (SEC) made under the SLS.

A spokesman for the LD said, "Employers must calculate and pay wages to imported workers according to the monthly wages specified in the SEC. Apart from deductions permitted by law and the SEC, employers must not solicit any rebate from imported workers after paying them wages. According to the Immigration Ordinance, an employer who violates the relevant provision is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a fine of \$100,000 and to imprisonment for two years. According to the Employment Ordinance, an employer who underpays an imported worker's wages is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a fine of \$350,000 and to imprisonment for three years.

"Employers must not deduct imported workers' wages for the purpose of paying any dues or fees charged on the workers by authorities or agents in the workers' countries of origin. If employers provide meals to imported workers, the meals must be provided free of charge and no deduction from wages should be made for the provision of meals. According to the Employment Ordinance, an employer who makes illegal deduction from wages of an imported worker is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a fine of \$100,000 and to imprisonment for one year," the LD spokesman added.

Furthermore, employers must grant rest days and other holidays to imported workers in accordance with the Employment Ordinance. If imported workers work overtime, they must be remunerated according to the SEC. The work arrangements of imported workers must also be in compliance with the requirements of the SEC.

The spokesman emphasised that if employers have breached the provisions of the law or requirements of the SEC or the SLS, the approvals granted to them for importing workers may be withdrawn.

Apart from the statutory provisions on employment and immigration matters, employers may also refer to the SEC signed with their imported workers and the pamphlet "How to Apply under Supplementary Labour Scheme" (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/form/eform/sld/note/EF0601/Pamph.pdf) to understand the relevant requirements for compliance.

Employers may call the SLS hotline at 2150 6363 for enquiries.

Funding results of Theme-based Research Scheme 2018/19 announced

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Research Grants Council (RGC) announced today (July 16) the funding results of the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS) 2018/19 (Eighth Round). Five proposals were awarded a total of some \$206 million. The list of awarded projects is set out in the Annex.

The Chairman of the RGC, Professor Benjamin Wah, said, "After a vigorous series of peer reviews, I am delighted to announce that five outstanding projects have been selected for funding in this round of the TRS exercise. These research projects, covering the areas of HIV functional cure, neurodegenerative diseases, sustainable marine infrastructure, financial technology, and automatic robotic surgery, would be greatly beneficial to human health and the built environment and would advance Hong Kong to the frontiers of knowledge in financial technology and artificial intelligence. We look forward to the impacts brought by these research projects to both local society and to the world at large."

"For the coming round of the TRS exercise, three new grand-challenge topics, namely 'Food Production and Food Security', 'Financial Technologies (FinTech) and Regulatory Technologies (RegTech)' and 'Artificial Intelligence', will be introduced. Together with the existing 16 grand challenge topics, the TRS will provide a wide spectrum of research topics for the research community to submit proposals contributing to the long-term strategic development of Hong Kong. I would also like to express our gratitude to the panel members and international experts for their invaluable advice, and the local research community for their continued support," said Professor Wah.

Details of the approved projects are posted on the RGC website (www.ugc.edu.hk).

Update on cases of Legionnaires'

disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (July 16) 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 July 8 to 14, four community-acquired LD cases were reported. They are:

1. A male patient, aged 69 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Kin Ma House, Ma Hang Estate, 30 Cape Road, Southern District;
2. A male patient, aged 67 with good past health, who lives in Kam Kin Mansion, 119-125 Caine Road, Central and Western District;
3. A male patient, aged 63 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wai Yuen House, Chuk Yuen (North) Estate, 8 Wing Chuk Street, Wong Tai Sin District; and
4. A male patient, aged 97 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wah Lai House, Wah Kwai Estate, 3 Wah Kwai Road, Southern District.

"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 July 14, 42 LD cases have 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:

- 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 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.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, July 16, 2018 is 103 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, July 14, 2018 was 103 (up 0.1 against last Friday's index).

July 2018 issue of "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" now available

The Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) published today (July 16) the July 2018 issue of the "Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics" (HKMDS).

Apart from providing up-to-date statistics, this issue also contains two feature articles entitled "Foreign Affiliates Statistics of Hong Kong" and "The Profile of Hong Kong Population Analysed by District Council District, 2017".

"Foreign Affiliates Statistics of Hong Kong"

With increasing globalisation of the world economy, it becomes popular for multinational enterprises to provide services to customers in another economy through setting up affiliated companies abroad.

In view of the growing importance of services supplied via this mode, the C&SD has developed a statistical framework for compiling relevant statistics, known as "foreign affiliates statistics (FATS)". This feature article briefly describes the statistical system for compiling inward FATS, and presents selected inward FATS of Hong Kong for 2016.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Trade in Services Statistics Section, C&SD (Tel: 3903 7410; email: tis@censtatd.gov.hk).

"The Profile of Hong Kong Population Analysed by District Council District, 2017"

The C&SD annually compiles statistics on the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the population by District Council district based on data collected from the General Household Survey. This feature article provides an analysis on the profile of the population of Hong Kong for various District Council districts in 2017.

For enquiries about this feature article, please contact the Household

Statistics Analysis Section, C&SD (Tel: 2887 5208; email: ghs@censtatd.gov.hk).

Published in bilingual form, the HKMDS is a compact volume of official statistics containing about 140 tables. It collects up-to-date statistical series on various aspects of the social and economic situation of Hong Kong. Topics include population; labour; external trade; National Income and Balance of Payments; prices; business performance; energy; housing and property; government accounts, finance and insurance; and transport, communications and tourism. For selected key statistical items, over 20 charts depicting the annual trend in the past decade and quarterly or monthly trend in the recent two years are also available. Users can download the Digest free of charge at the website of the C&SD (www.censtatd.gov.hk/hkstat/sub/sp460.jsp?productCode=B1010002).

Enquiries about the contents of the Digest can be directed to the Statistical Information Services Section of the C&SD (Tel: 2582 4738; email: gen-enquiry@censtatd.gov.hk).