

Special work arrangement for Government employees

A spokesman for the Government announced today (July 19) that save for those involved in the provision of emergency services and essential public services, all other government employees should work from home starting from tomorrow (July 20). The measure will be implemented tentatively for a week until July 26. The Government will closely monitor the epidemic situation and review the arrangement in due course.

In view of the severity of the local epidemic situation, the Government needs to take further measures in order to significantly reduce the flow of people and social contacts to stop COVID-19 from further spreading in the community.

Government departments will continue to provide emergency services and essential public services. Individual government departments will announce the latest arrangements of their services separately. The Government appreciates that the reduction in public services in view of the epidemic will bring inconvenience to the public but appeals for their understanding.

The spokesman strongly appealed to employers of private organisations to allow their staff members to work from home as far as possible according to their operational needs so as to reduce the flow of people and social contacts in the community.

HAD to open temporary night heat shelters

The Home Affairs Department will open 19 temporary night heat shelters tonight (July 19) for people in need of the service.

The shelters will be open from 10.30pm until 8am tomorrow.

For further information, please call the department's hotline before midnight on 2572 8427.

The 19 night heat shelters are located at:

Hong Kong Districts:

Central and Western –

Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall
3/F, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex,
2 High Street, Sai Ying Pun

Eastern –
Causeway Bay Community Centre
3/F, 7 Fook Yum Road, Causeway Bay

Southern –
Lei Tung Community Hall
Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

Wan Chai –
Wan Chai Activities Centre
LG/F, Wan Chai Market, 258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

Kowloon Districts:

Kowloon City –
Hung Hom Community Hall
1/F, Kowloon City Government Offices,
42 Bailey Street, Hung Hom

Kwun Tong –
Lam Tin (West) Estate Community Centre
71 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin

Sham Shui Po –
Shek Kip Mei Community Hall
G/F, Block 42, Shek Kip Mei Estate, Sham Shui Po

Wong Tai Sin –
Tsz Wan Shan (South) Estate Community Centre
45 Wan Wah Street, Tsz Wan Shan

Yau Tsim Mong –
Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre
60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei

New Territories Districts:

Islands –
Tung Chung Community Hall
G/F, Tung Chung Municipal Services Building,
39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung

Kwai Tsing –
Kwai Shing Community Hall
Podium, Block 6, Kwai Shing West Estate, Kwai Chung

North –

Cheung Wah Community Hall
Cheung Wah Estate, Fanling

Sai Kung –
Hang Hau Community Hall
G/F, Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Government Complex,
38 Pui Shing Road, Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O

Sha Tin –
Lung Hang Estate Community Centre
Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin

Tai Po –
Tai Po Community Centre
2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Tsuen Wan –
Lei Muk Shue Community Hall
G/F, Hong Shue House, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan

Tuen Mun –
Butterfly Bay Community Centre
Butterfly Estate (near Tip Sum House), Tuen Mun

Yuen Long –
Long Ping Community Hall
Long Ping Estate, Yuen Long

Yuen Long –
Tin Yiu Community Centre
Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai

Government clarifies on necessity of quarantine exemption arrangement

With regard to criticisms that the quarantine exemption arrangement has brought about loopholes in the quarantine regime and that the latest wave of epidemic was attributable to the prevailing quarantine exemption arrangement, a Government spokesman emphasised today (July 19) that this is a misunderstanding.

The spokesman explained that the existing exemption arrangement under the compulsory quarantine regime is essential to maintain the necessary operation of the society and the economy, and to ensure an uninterrupted supply of all daily necessities to the public. The Government has been closely monitoring the risk and pressure on public health brought about by

imported cases and would continue to adopt relevant coping measures in a resolute manner as necessary.

The spokesman pointed out that there had not been any confirmed cases of COVID-19 among exempted persons arriving from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan.

Under the Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C) and the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E), all persons arriving at Hong Kong, except those exempted by the Chief Secretary for Administration in accordance with provisions of the regulations, are subject to compulsory quarantine for 14 days.

The spokesman said that the purpose of the two regulations is to suppress the passenger flow so as to minimise the risk of disease transmission into Hong Kong. Nonetheless, it is necessary for the quarantine exemption arrangement to be in place to ensure the normal operation of Hong Kong on all fronts under the epidemic, including the need to safeguard adequate supply of food and necessities to Hong Kong, ensure normal governmental operation, sustain commercial activities in the interest of Hong Kong's economic development etc. The categories of persons exempted under the regulations are essential personnel which includes, among others, cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers, air crew, sea crew and foreign consular staff.

The spokesman clarified, "Since early March, Hong Kong has not recorded any imported cases from the Mainland. As for imported cases from foreign places, as non-Hong Kong residents have been denied entry to Hong Kong since March 25, the majority of the current imported cases concern Hong Kong residents returning from foreign places."

Since the implementation of the exemption mechanism, the Department of Health (DH) has been requiring exempted persons to undergo medical surveillance for 14 days during their stay in Hong Kong. Persons under medical surveillance are required to wear masks and check temperature twice daily, and report to the DH on any discomfort. In addition, exempted persons are also subject to the temperature check and health declaration procedures carried out by the DH at boundary control points upon arrival.

The spokesman added, "In light of the latest situation of the COVID-19 outbreak and on the premises of protecting the health of Hong Kong people and safeguarding Hong Kong's robust healthcare system, we have enhanced the testing arrangement for exempted persons arriving Hong Kong from foreign places."

Currently, all persons exempted from quarantine entering Hong Kong from the Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) are subject to COVID-19 testing in addition to undergoing medical surveillance for 14 days as aforementioned. All air crew and sea crew members must proceed to DH's Temporary Specimen Collection Centre at the AsiaWorld-Expo to have their deep throat saliva samples collected upon arrival at the HKIA.

In view that air crew members arriving Hong Kong from overseas make up the largest group of exempted persons, enhancing testing for this group of people can help further lower the chance of virus spread in Hong Kong. DH will continue to closely monitor the latest situation of COVID-19 around the world and review the quarantine and testing arrangements for inbound travelers entering Hong Kong from other control points including exempted persons.

The spokesman said, "The Government has been imposing additional exemption conditions in accordance with the risk level of respective exemption categories. For instance, we have requested shipping companies to arrange all crew members of cargo ships and passenger vessels to undergo nucleic acid tests at the point of departure within 48 hours before embarking to travel to Hong Kong. Only those who are able to produce negative test results should be arranged to travel to Hong Kong. If the above conditions are not met, the crew member will not be granted exemption and will be denied entry into Hong Kong. The shipping agents must arrange isolated accommodation and point-to-point transfers to and from the vessel for the sea crew members to ensure they will not enter public places."

In addition, for the categories of exempted persons arriving Hong Kong from the Mainland, regular COVID-19 testing arrangement has been put in place for cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers and cross-boundary students which form the two largest exemption categories.

The spokesman supplemented, "The Government has been closely monitoring the risk and pressure on public health brought about by a considerable number of imported cases and would continue to adopt relevant coping measures in a resolute manner as necessary. Having regard to the latest public health risk assessment, the Government has announced on July 18 to impose conditions on travellers who had visited the seven specified high risk places (i.e. Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and South Africa), to reduce the health risk they may bring to Hong Kong. These conditions include the provision of negative result of nucleic acid test for COVID-19 and confirmation proof of room reservation in a hotel."

New Territories West Cluster updates on case of staff members of Tuen Mun Eye Centre tested positive to COVID-19

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson of the New Territories West Cluster (NTWC) made the

following update today (July 19) regarding staff of the Tuen Mun Eye Centre (TMEC) confirmed COVID-19 infection yesterday:

Contact tracing was performed by NTWC upon staff members of TMEC confirmed COVID-19 infection and one more female operational assistant was tested preliminarily positive to COVID-19 today. The staff was mainly responsible for the handling of patient medical records and also worked in the back office on the ground floor. Since July 13, she had stationed at the temperature check counter at TMEC entrance for 1.5 hours every morning with appropriate protective personal equipment. NTWC will continue to closely monitor the health condition of TMEC staff members. The three clerical staff confirmed positive to COVID-19 yesterday (July 18) are currently staying in Tuen Mun Hospital with stable condition.

Since most of the TMEC clerical staff need to be quarantined, TMEC will be temporarily closed tomorrow (July 20). Patients with elective surgery or out-patient appointment will be rescheduled and do not need to return to TMEC. Ophthalmic patients with urgent condition are advised to attend Accident and Emergency Department in Tuen Mun Hospital or nearby hospitals.

In addition, since patient medical records are suggested to be disinfected and setting aside for 10 days, the surgery and out-patient services before July 28 may be affected. TMEC will implement appropriate arrangement in accordance with patients' conditions. For enquiries, patients can call 2478 5122 from 1pm to 5pm today or 9am to 5pm on coming Monday to Friday.

No. 3 alarm fire in Kwai Chung (4)

A No.3 alarm fire broke out at an unit of Kwai Yue House, Kwai Chun Court, Kwai Chung this morning (July 19). It was largely put out at 8.30am.

Firemen used two jets and mobilised two breathing apparatus teams to fight the blaze. About 100 people were led to safety and about 200 people were self-evacuated to places of safety.

One person felt uncomfortable after inhaling smoke and has been sent to hospital for medical treatment.

A woman was found and certified dead at the scene.