

## Person and company convicted for illegally operating private columbarium

A person and a company were convicted of illegally operating a private columbarium, contravening the Private Columbaria Ordinance, by the West Kowloon Magistrates' Courts today (July 16). They were each fined \$9,000, with a criminal record registered against the person.

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today that the Private Columbaria Affairs Office (PCAO) of the FEHD had earlier detected that a columbarium in Cheung Pei Shan Road, Tsuen Wan, was suspected to have operated and managed a private columbarium without a licence under the Ordinance. An operation was thus mounted at the premises. The operators of the unlicensed columbarium were arrested and prosecuted.

Under the Ordinance, any person who operates, keeps, manages or in any other way has control of a columbarium other than under a licence commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$2 million and imprisonment for three years; or on conviction on indictment to a fine of \$5 million and imprisonment for seven years.

The spokesman said, "This department will continue to take stringent enforcement action against illegally operated private columbaria. Members of the public should not buy or rent niches from any unlicensed columbaria. If members of the public suspect any activities of illegally operating a columbarium, they should immediately report them to the PCAO by calling hotline 3142 2300."

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## Man convicted of managing unlicensed employment agency

The Labour Department (LD) reminds members of the public to obtain a proper licence before operating an employment agency (EA) or they may face prosecution.

The reminder was made after a man was convicted of managing an EA without a valid licence and fined \$80,000 at Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts today (July 16).

In February 2019, the Employment Agencies Administration (EAA) of the LD

received a complaint against Sincere Care Employment Centre in Sai Kung from an employer seeking to hire a foreign domestic helper. As the investigation revealed sufficient evidence that the man was managing an unlicensed EA and the complainant was willing to act as prosecution witness, the LD decided to take out prosecution.

All establishments or persons operating a business in Hong Kong for the purpose of obtaining employment for another person or supplying personnel to an employer are governed by Part XII of the Employment Ordinance (EO) and the Employment Agency Regulations. Irrespective of the modus operandi or the types of jobs involved, all EAs must obtain a licence issued by the LD before undertaking any EA activities. Except for the EA licence holder or his/her associate, no one shall operate, manage or assist in the management of an EA, or they may face prosecution.

The LD reminds EAs to operate in full compliance with the law as well as the Code of Practice for EAs at all times. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution and/or revocation of licence. The Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 2018, which came into force on February 9, 2018, raised the maximum penalty for unlicensed operation of an EA and overcharging of job-seekers' commissions to a fine of \$350,000 and imprisonment for three years.

For enquiries or complaints about unlicensed operation or overcharging of commissions by EAs, please call the EAA of the LD at 2115 3667 or visit its office at Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon.

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## **Taxi drivers may make appointment for the voluntary one-off free COVID-19 testing service from tomorrow**

The Transport Department (TD) will commence registration tomorrow (July 17) for taxi drivers to make appointment for the one-off COVID-19 testing service. The testing is voluntary and free of charge. Taxi drivers are required to make appointment prior to the test by telephone, and conduct the test at the designated temporary specimen collection centres at a specific time slot.

In response to confirmed cases from various of industries in the community, the Government will provide voluntary one-off free COVID-19 testing service to high risk groups to safeguard public health. Among them, temporary specimen collection centres providing services to taxi drivers will commence service gradually from July 19. Specimen collection centres are located at Rumsey Street Car Park, Yau Ma Tei Car Park, Tsuen Wan Car Park

and Kwai Fong Car Park. Details of the centres, including the addresses, opening dates and hours, are listed in the annex.

Individuals holding a valid Hong Kong permanent identity card and a taxi driver identity plate may dial the registration hotline 1836 168 from tomorrow, 9am to 9pm daily, to make an appointment of July 19 or a later time slot for specimen collection. Same-day appointment will not be offered by the registration hotline. Duty officers of the telephone booking service centres will register the name, identity card number, taxi driver identity plate number and contact number of the taxi driver. Upon successful registration, an SMS to confirm the date, time and location to conduct the collection of specimen will be sent to the taxi driver. Taxi drivers are advised to prepare relevant materials beforehand for a smooth registration.

Upon arrival at the designated testing location at the appointment time slot, taxi drivers are required to present a valid Hong Kong permanent identity card and a taxi driver identity plate for identity verification. Duty officers of the contractor will collect the specimen of nasopharyngeal swab test from taxi drivers, and deliver the specimen to laboratories for testing. The contractor of the testing service will not retain the personal data of taxi drivers, and in case of a taxi driver's positive testing result, the contractor will notify the TD on the specimen serial number and the TD will relay the details of the related taxi driver to the Centre for Health Protection for follow-up.

This testing service offers each taxi driver a test once. The TD will review the arrangement in a timely manner, and to increase the number of specimen collection centres according to needs including setting up of temporary specimen collection centres at Islands District. If necessary, the provision of testing service will also be extended.

The TD appeals to the taxi industry to actively participate in the test, and will continuously promote the public transport sector's vigilance against the pandemic with all feasible measures to ensure public health and minimize risks of the spread of virus in the community. For details of the voluntary one-off free COVID-19 testing service, please refer to the website of TD ([www.td.gov.hk](http://www.td.gov.hk)).

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## **LegCo meeting to continue tomorrow**

The following is issued on behalf of the Legislative Council Secretariat:

As the business on the agenda of the Legislative Council (LegCo) meeting cannot be finished today (July 16), the President of LegCo has, in accordance with Rule 14(4) of the Rules of Procedure, decided that the Council meeting will resume tomorrow (July 17) at 8pm.

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## Sample of prepackaged frozen green wrasse fillet detected with methylmercury exceeding legal limit

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (July 16) that a sample of prepackaged frozen green wrasse fillet imported from New Zealand was found to contain a metal contaminant, methylmercury, at a level exceeding the legal limit. The CFS is following up on the case.

Product details are as follows:

Product name: (Not available in English)  
Place of origin: New Zealand  
Distributor: New Kwok Wah  
Importer: Ocean Harvest Frozen Food Ltd  
Best-before date: December 17, 2020

"Subsequent to announcing earlier that a sample of prepackaged frozen green wrasse fillet taken from a fresh provision shop in Wan Chai was found to contain mercury at a level exceeding the legal limit, the CFS detected a similar irregularity in another sample of another batch of the same product taken from the same shop for testing during follow-up investigation. The test result showed that it contained methylmercury at a level of 1.1 parts per million (ppm), exceeding the legal limit of 0.5 ppm," a CFS spokesman said.

"The CFS has informed the vendor concerned of the irregularity and instructed it to stop sale and remove from shelves all batches of the affected product. The importer concerned has initiated a recall according to the CFS' instructions. Members of the public may call the importer's hotline at 2563 8878 during office hours for enquiries about the recall. The CFS is also tracing the source of the affected product. Prosecution will be instituted should there be sufficient evidence," the spokesman added.

"Methylmercury is the major form of mercury in fish. Mercury may affect the nervous system, particularly the developing brain. At high levels, mercury can affect foetal brain development, and affect vision, hearing, muscle co-ordination and memory in adults. Furthermore, as some international organisations such as the World Health Organization have pointed out, consuming predatory fish species is the main source of mercury intake for human beings. The report of the CFS' Total Diet Study has also pointed out that large fish or predatory fish species may contain high mercury levels (for example, tuna, albacore, shark, swordfish, marlin, orange roughy and king mackerel). Hence, groups particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of mercury, such as pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children, should opt for fish that are smaller in size for consumption and

avoid consumption of the above-mentioned types of fish which may contain high mercury levels to minimise the health risk posed to the foetus, infants and young children by excessive exposure to metal contaminants in food," he added.

According to the Food Adulteration (Metallic Contamination) Regulations (Cap 132V), any person who sells food with metallic contamination above the legal limit may be prosecuted and is liable upon conviction to a fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

"People are advised to maintain a balanced and varied diet. To avoid health risks posed by excessive intake of metallic contaminants, the public, especially pregnant women, women planning pregnancy and young children, should avoid eating large or predatory fish," the spokesman said.

The CFS will alert the trade, continue to follow up on the case and take appropriate action. Investigation is ongoing.