

Test results of targeted surveillance on coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms in ready-to-eat food all satisfactory

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department today (July 10) announced the results of a recently completed targeted food surveillance project on coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms (including *Staphylococcus aureus*) in ready-to-eat food. All samples passed the test.

A spokesman for the CFS said that a total of 300 ready-to-eat food samples were collected from different retail outlets (including online retailers) and food factories for testing of coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms this year. The samples included meat, poultry and their products (for example shredded chicken, siu mei and lo mei), salad, sashimi and sushi, dessert, Chinese cold dishes, sandwiches and steamed rice rolls.

The spokesman pointed out that *Staphylococcus aureus* is a common bacterium that can cause food poisoning. It exists widely in the environment and is commonly found in the nasal cavity, throat, hair and skin of healthy individuals. It is also present in large numbers in wounds and infected regions. If food handlers do not observe good personal hygiene, *Staphylococcus aureus* can pass to foods from them. Foods stored at ambient temperature for a prolonged period will allow the toxin-producing *Staphylococcus aureus* to multiply and form elaborate enterotoxins which can cause food poisoning. Although most cases of infection are caused by *Staphylococcus aureus*, other coagulase-positive staphylococci species can also produce enterotoxins which can lead to food poisoning.

Food poisoning caused by coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms is usually associated with foods that require considerable manual handling during preparation and have no subsequent cooking required before consumption. The poisoning risk cannot be eliminated by reheating as enterotoxins produced by coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms cannot be destroyed under normal cooking temperatures. Common symptoms of food poisoning caused by coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms include nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain, often accompanied by diarrhoea.

"Despite the fact that test results of the samples were all satisfactory, the trade and the public should not take the risk lightly. They should always maintain good personal, environmental and food hygiene to ensure food safety. To prevent food poisoning caused by coagulase-positive staphylococci organisms, members of the public are reminded to keep perishable foods or leftovers at or below 4 degrees Celsius or above 60 degrees C. The trade should adhere to the Good Manufacturing Practice that cooked food should be cooled from 60 degrees C to 20 degrees C as quickly as

possible (within two hours), and from 20 degrees C to 4 degrees C within four hours or less," the spokesman said.

Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation **(Amendment) Ordinance 2020** **(Commencement) Notice gazetted**

The Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 (Commencement) Notice was gazetted today (July 10) to appoint December 1, 2020, as the commencement date of the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation (Amendment) Ordinance 2020 (Amendment Ordinance).

A Home Affairs Bureau spokesperson said, "The Amendment Ordinance seeks to improve the existing licensing regime, facilitate enforcement actions and enhance deterrence against unlicensed hotels and guesthouses."

To improve the existing licensing regime, the Amendment Ordinance empowers the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Authority (Authority) to take into account in the licensing process the relevant restrictive provisions in land documents, local residents' views, and whether the licence applicant is a "fit and proper" person. The Amendment Ordinance also provides for a differentiation between a hotel licence and a guesthouse licence, and empowers the Authority to impose a licence condition on a guesthouse licence to prohibit the use of the word "hotel" in its business name.

To facilitate enforcement actions, the Amendment Ordinance introduces a strict liability offence. If there is evidence which proves that the premises are used as an unlicensed hotel or guesthouse, the owners and tenants of the premises (which refer to persons given exclusive possession of the premises concerned under a tenancy and do not include guests patronising the premises) will be held criminally liable, unless they can provide a relevant statutory defence. Moreover, in order to combat unlicensed hotels and guesthouses, the Amendment Ordinance empowers the Authority to apply for a search warrant to allow enforcement officers to break into, with reasonable force when necessary, a suspected unlicensed hotel or guesthouse to inspect or collect evidence.

As regards enhancing deterrence, the Amendment Ordinance empowers the Authority to apply to the court, upon the second conviction within 16 months of operating an unlicensed hotel or guesthouse or the new strict liability offence in respect of the same premises, to issue a closure order for the premises for six months. The maximum penalty will also be increased from a fine of \$200,000 to \$500,000, and imprisonment from two years to three years.

The spokesperson added, "To let existing licensees make preparation for migration to the new regime, we will put in place a transitional period of 12 months after the commencement of the Amendment Ordinance."

Specifically, if an existing licence expires within the 12-month transitional period, the licensee can apply for renewal based on the existing requirements for a period not exceeding 12 months. Upon expiry of this first-renewed licence, the licensee will have to meet all new requirements for further renewal of the licence.

Operation of hotels and guesthouses in Hong Kong is regulated by the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance (Ordinance). The Ordinance aims to, through a licensing regime, ensure that premises intended to be used as hotels or guesthouses meet the building structure and fire safety standards specified in the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) and the Fire Services Ordinance (Cap. 95). In view of the safety concerns and the potential nuisance to the neighbourhood caused by unlicensed hotels and guesthouses, there have been strong calls for a more stringent licensing mechanism. The public are also expecting more effective enforcement actions and stronger a deterrent effect against unlicensed hotels and guesthouses. To address the public concerns, the Government conducted an extensive consultation exercise to collect the views of the public and the trade. Based on the views collected in the public consultation, the Government proposed to amend the Ordinance to enhance the licensing regime. The relevant proposals have been included in the Amendment Ordinance passed by the Legislative Council on June 11, 2020.

For details of the Amendment Ordinance, please contact the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA) under the Home Affairs Department at 3107 3021 or visit the website of the OLA (www.hadla.gov.hk).

Tenders invited for Free-flow Tolling System in Hong Kong – Development of Backend System

The Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) today (July 10) invited tenders for the Free-flow Tolling System in Hong Kong – Development of Backend System (Contract No. ED0 4/2019).

The project is scheduled to commence in December 2020 and will take about 54 months to complete. The project includes:

(1) design, supply, delivery, installation, testing and commissioning for the Backend System serving the Free-flow Tolling System at government tolled

roads/tunnels as specified, and other related services; and
(2) three-year Backend System expansion works.

The CEDD has appointed Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong Limited as the consultant to design and supervise the project. Interested tenderers may obtain the tender documents and further particulars from the company at Level 5, Festival Walk, 80 Tat Chee Avenue, Kowloon Tong.

The invitation to tender was gazetted today. The closing time for the tender is noon on September 4, 2020.

Details of the tender notice are available at the CEDD's website (www.cedd.gov.hk/eng/tender-notices/index.html). For enquiries, please call Ove Arup & Partners Hong Kong Limited at 2268 3540 during office hours.

Medical institution convicted for repeated illegal transport of clinical waste

Yee Health Company Limited violated the law by failing to hire a licensed clinical waste collector or arrange for healthcare professionals to deliver clinical waste directly to the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre for disposal. The company was convicted and fined \$14,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (July 10) for contravening the Waste Disposal (Clinical Waste) (General) Regulation.

During blitz inspections, staff of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) found that Yee Health Company Limited had illegally transported a total of about 10kg of clinical waste produced from various locations where outreach vaccination activities were held to the company's office in San Po Kong for temporary storage, contravening the requirements of the Regulation. The EPD prosecuted Yee Health Company Limited under the Regulation after investigations and gathering evidence.

A spokesman for the EPD said that the department is very concerned about the illegal transport of clinical waste by individual medical institutions, and would continue to arrange for law-enforcement officers to carry out blitz inspections of different medical institutions and premises where vaccinations are given so as to combat the illegal transport of clinical waste. The spokesman added that some clinical waste, for instance, needles or other sharp instruments, may carry infectious substances. Such objects can easily spread viruses if they are handled improperly during the process of transport. The EPD reminded responsible persons and staff of medical institutions that they must properly arrange for authorised persons to

collect, deliver and dispose of clinical waste in accordance with the law to safeguard public health.

According to the Regulation, clinical waste must be delivered by licensed clinical waste collectors or healthcare professionals directly from its place of production to the Chemical Waste Treatment Centre for disposal. Otherwise, it is an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000. The EPD will continue to promote to health workers and medical institutions the methods and importance of properly handling clinical waste through seminars and workshops with the Hospital Authority, the Department of Health, tertiary institutions and medical professional bodies as well as thematic pamphlets and websites. Members of the public and property management offices may report any suspected illegal collection, transport or disposal of clinical waste to the EPD by calling the department's hotline at 2835 1055.

Rates and Government rent due July 31

Demand notes for rates and/or Government rent for the quarter from July to September 2020 have been issued, and payment should be made by July 31, 2020.

The demand notes have reflected the rates concession for this quarter, subject to a ceiling of \$1,500 and \$5,000 for each rateable domestic and non-domestic tenement respectively. Any unused portion of the concession in this quarter will not be used to offset the outstanding rates in any other quarter. The concession does not apply to payment of Government rent.

Payment can be made:

- (1) by using autopay or electronic means (such as PPS, bank automated teller machines (ATMs), Faster Payment System (FPS) or Internet);
- (2) by uploading an e-Cheque/e-Cashier's Order via the Pay e-Cheque portal www.payecheque.gov.hk;
- (3) by sending a crossed cheque to the Treasury, P0 Box 28000, Gloucester Road Post Office, Hong Kong (please note that mail with underpaid postage will be rejected); or
- (4) in person at any of the post offices or designated convenience stores. For the addresses and opening hours of post offices, please call Hongkong Post's hotline (2921 2222), or visit www.hongkongpost.hk.

If demand notes have not been received, members of the public may call 2152 0111, fax 2152 0113, or visit the Rating and Valuation Department, 15/F, Cheung Sha Wan Government Offices, 303 Cheung Sha Wan Road, Kowloon.

Members of the public can also visit the Department's website at www.rvd.gov.hk to obtain replacement demand notes or enquire about the amount payable. For instant payment, payers may obtain a payment QR code or an FPS payment code from the Account Enquiries service at the website. Payers may present the payment QR code by using mobile devices (e.g. mobile phone or tablet) at any post office, 7-Eleven, Circle K or VanGo in Hong Kong or use any mobile banking app or e-wallet which supports government FPS bill payments to scan the FPS payment code for payment.

A surcharge of 5 per cent will be imposed for late payment and a further surcharge of 10 per cent will be levied on the amount (including the 5 per cent surcharge) that remains unpaid six months after the payment deadline.

To support environmental protection, payers are advised to utilise the free eRVD Bill service to receive e-bills and make payments. Payers are also encouraged to settle bills by Autopay or other means of e-payment (e.g. PPS, ATM, Internet or e-Cheque/e-Cashier Order) in order to save queuing time. Application forms for autopay are obtainable from the Rating and Valuation Department, District Offices and major banks in Hong Kong or by telephoning 2152 0111. Payers may also download the form from the Department's website.