

FEHD appeals to grave sweepers to stagger grave-sweeping activities over wider period before and after Ching Ming Festival

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) today (March 11) appealed to members of the public to stagger grave-sweeping activities over a wider period before and after the Ching Ming Festival to avoid grave sweeping during the peak period on the day of the Ching Ming Festival (April 4) so as to avoid the gathering of people and reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The opening hours of public columbaria under the FEHD will be extended to 7am to 7pm two weeks before and after the Ching Ming Festival (i.e. covering the period between March 20 and April 18) to lessen crowd conditions. People visiting cemeteries and columbaria paying respect to ancestors should avoid meal gatherings at worship sites or in crowded places. They are also urged to maintain appropriate social distancing with other people as far as possible, comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease, maintain good personal hygiene and keep the environment clean when sweeping graves. The FEHD will also step up cleaning services inside public cemeteries and columbaria during the festival period."

The spokesman reminded the public to pay attention to special traffic and transport arrangements which will be implemented during the Ching Ming Festival. Access to cemeteries and columbaria of the FEHD will be closed to all vehicles while the special traffic and transport arrangements are in operation, except for those with permission. Nim Wan Road to Tsang Tsui Columbarium will be closed on Saturdays, Sundays and the public holidays during the two weeks before and after the Ching Ming Festival. While grave sweepers are not allowed to walk or drive to Tsang Tsui Columbarium, KMB will provide a special route, 56S, plying between MTR Tuen Mun Station and Tsang Tsui Columbarium. For details of the special traffic and transport arrangements in the vicinities of cemeteries and crematoria during the Ching Ming Festival, please visit the Transport Department website (www.td.gov.hk).

In addition, the spokesman called on grave sweepers to co-operate by clearing stagnant water and rubbish before leaving to prevent mosquito breeding. Containers such as lunch boxes, drink cans, plastic bags and buckets for burning incense should also be removed. As a precaution against mosquitoes, grave sweepers are advised to wear light-coloured long-sleeved tops and trousers, and apply insect repellent to exposed parts of their body. Managers of private cemeteries are also advised to take relevant precautions against mosquitoes.

To protect the environment and to prevent hill fires, members of the

public are encouraged to replace incense burning with flowers when paying tribute to their ancestors. Grave sweepers should take extra care when burning incense, which should only be carried out inside a designated joss paper furnace or iron bucket. They should make sure that all fires have gone out before leaving. Grave sweepers are also reminded to keep flammable items (such as alcohol antiseptic sprays and alcohol-based instant hand sanitiser) away from fires.

The Government has been promoting green burials, and the FEHD has set up the Green Burial Central Register (www.greenburial.gov.hk) to enable the public to register their wish for green burial in advance. The FEHD has also set up the Internet Memorial Service webpage (www.memorial.gov.hk) and its mobile application for members of the public to pay tribute to their deceased beloved ones anywhere and anytime.