

FEHD proactively co-ordinates supply of coffins and appeals to funeral trade to support deceased from COVID-19

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (March 22) that the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has continued to proactively co-ordinate with relevant Mainland authorities on cross-boundary goods vehicle trips and sea freight arrangements for the supply of coffins to Hong Kong. A total of over 960 coffins have arrived in Hong Kong via sea and land over the past four days to supplement the coffin supply. In addition, the FEHD expressed its heartfelt appreciation to Tung Wah Group of Hospitals (TWGH) for deploying its Global Funeral Parlour as the designated funeral parlour for holding of viewing ceremonies for those deceased with COVID-19. The spokesman appealed to the funeral trade to support and collaborate to offer assistance to the families in need.

The Food and Health Bureau and the FEHD have been offering assistance to coffin suppliers in Hong Kong during the past two weeks. Over 2 170 coffins have arrived in Hong Kong smoothly via land and sea since March 14. It is expected that further batches of nearly 1 050 coffins will arrive in the coming five days. The FEHD again expressed gratitude for the assistance from the Mainland, and will continue to co-ordinate proactively to ensure a stable supply of coffins in Hong Kong.

Separately, the FEHD has been maintaining close liaison with the trade to streamline the workflow for the handling of after-death arrangements smoothly. The spokesman expressed his heartfelt appreciation to TWGH for deploying its Global Funeral Parlour as the designated funeral parlour for holding funeral services for the deceased with COVID-19 from March 29 onwards, making available more service halls and opening designated places inside the parlour for the use by licensed undertakers of burials for hygienic preparation of the deceased and holding of viewing ceremonies. The spokesman also appealed to other funeral parlours and undertakers of burials to support such measures and proactively offer assistance to families in need to handle after-death arrangements.

Following a number of webinars, the FEHD has issued letters to the funeral trade to inform them of progress made in response to their feedback. Separately, some benevolent organisations intend to donate anti-epidemic supplies (such as rapid antigen test kits) to frontline workers of the funeral trade, and the FEHD will keep the licensees of funeral parlours and undertakers posted of details in due course. Relevant information of the letters and webinars is set out in the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/cc/webinar_funeral_trade_20220316.html).

Taking into consideration the pressing need for cremation services by the public, the FEHD has earlier significantly increased the daily cremation sessions available for booking to 260-300. Currently, there remain sufficient cremation sessions available. The FEHD has increased manpower correspondingly to handle the booking of cremation services to ensure that all applications can be handled within the same working day. The spokesman also reminded that all crematoria of the FEHD will continue to provide cremation services on the day of Ching Ming Festival (April 5). Members of the public using cremation services on the day of Ching Ming Festival should pay attention to the special traffic and transport arrangements to be implemented in the vicinity of respective crematoria on that day. Except for hearses, funeral vehicles and permitted vehicles, no other vehicles will be allowed to enter the crematoria of the FEHD while the special traffic and transport arrangements are in operation. For details of the arrangements, please visit the Transport Department website (www.td.gov.hk).