

FEHD steps up inspections and reminds catering business operators and public to continue complying with anti-epidemic regulations

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) stepped up inspections at catering premises (including eateries and cooked food centres) in Tai Po District, Mong Kok District and Wong Tai Sin District and reminded the catering business operators to strictly comply with the requirements under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation), and the public to comply with the various restrictions in relation to group gatherings and mask-wearing under the anti-epidemic regulations and directions when patronising catering premises.

FEHD officers yesterday (November 14) conducted inspections in Tai Po District and Mong Kok District, and conducted joint operations with the Police in Tsz Wan Shan. During the operations, a total of 102 catering premises (including 50 eateries and 52 cooked food stalls) were inspected. Twenty-five verbal warnings were given. Procedures on prosecution were initiated against four catering business operators for breaching the Regulation, mainly violating the requirements on the distance between tables or partition serving as effective buffer and the requirement on mask-wearing; and also against two catering business operators for breaching the Food Business Regulation (Cap. 132X) in terms of illegal extension of the business areas of their catering premises. In addition, fixed penalty notices were issued against two persons for breaching the regulation on mask-wearing.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "According to the prevailing directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under the Regulation, catering business operators have to strictly comply with a series of requirements and restrictions, including, no more than six persons may be at one table in catering premises; the total number of customers allowed in catering premises must not exceed 75 per cent of the normal seating capacity; a mask must be worn within the premises except when the person is consuming food or drink; tables must be arranged in a way to ensure there is a distance of at least 1.5m or some form of partition which could serve as effective buffer between one table and another table; body temperature screening must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises; and hand sanitisers must be provided, etc."

The spokesman supplemented, "According to the latest directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering business under the Regulation that apply to the period from November 16 to 26 (see Gazette Notice published on November 14), the updated requirements and restrictions include: no more than two persons may be at one table for a bar/pub or night

establishment/nightclub while no more than four persons may be at one table for other catering premises; the total number of customers allowed in catering premises must not exceed 50 per cent of the normal seating capacity; a mask must be worn within the premises except when the person is consuming food or drink at a table therein."

As a warm reminder, the spokesman said, "Communal seating areas adjoining cooked food stalls in a public market are public places. The public must comply with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition in Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) that prohibits group gatherings of more than four persons in public places."

The spokesman stressed that for catering premises across the territory (including eateries and cooked food centres), the FEHD will continue to step up inspections and, as needed, conduct joint operations with the Police, to ensure that catering business operators and the public strictly comply with relevant regulations. Enforcement actions will be taken against offenders so as to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in food premises. If catering business operators contravene the Regulation, they are liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who violate the group gathering restriction of the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition in Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) are subject to a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

The spokesman appealed to catering business operators to comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner, with a view to keeping their staff, customers and the public safe. Members of the public also have to comply with the related regulations and directions on group gatherings at catering premises.