

FEHD strengthens measures to prevent employment of unqualified life-saving attendants by private swimming pools

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (March 6) that the FEHD plans to take measures starting from this year's swimming season to strengthen the prevention of suspected violations involving private swimming pools employing unqualified life-saving attendants to combat such offences. These steps aim to protect the safety of swimming pool users.

The spokesman said, "In accordance with the law and licensing conditions, licensees of private swimming pools are obliged to arrange a sufficient number of qualified life-saving attendants on duty during the opening hours of the pools. To ensure that licensees fulfil their responsibilities, the FEHD will explicitly require licensees to verify identity documents, Pool Lifeguard Awards (PLA) and personal logbooks before employing a life-saving attendant, and to properly keep a copy of the documents. The FEHD will also establish a standard template for licensees to record the information shown on the identity document and PLA of the life-saving attendants on duty."

At the same time, the FEHD will step up inspections, including checking the identity documents of each life-saving attendant on duty during monthly surprise inspections to verify their identity. The FEHD will also co-ordinate with the Hong Kong China Life Saving Society to confirm the validity of PLAs and ensure the life-saving attendants on duty possess valid qualifications. In addition to routine inspections, the FEHD will flexibly deploy its manpower resources and analyse complaint cases to draw up a target list of private swimming pools, to which inspections will be stepped up during July and August to specifically focus on lifeguard qualifications. In case of insufficient qualified life-saving attendants on duty, the department will take immediate follow-up actions, including requiring the licensee to immediately close the swimming pool until sufficient qualified life-saving attendants can be present at the pool, and will issue a warning or institute prosecution against licensees. The FEHD will consider cancelling the licences of swimming pools with repeated contraventions. Cases involving the use of false documents or documents relating to other persons will be reported to the Police.

The FEHD will also maintain close communication and enhance collaboration with other departments and organisations. Currently, many licensees of private swimming pools are either property management companies (PMCs) or their employees. The FEHD has already discussed with the Property Management Services Authority (PMSA) to jointly step up publicity and educational work before the swimming season this year, including issuing letters to PMCs calling for measures to prevent the employment of unqualified life-saving attendants. Meanwhile, the FEHD and the PMSA will establish a

communication mechanism in respect of violation cases for both parties to take follow-up actions, according to their respective authorities, against licensees and PMCs.

According to the Swimming Pools Regulation (Cap. 132CA) and relevant licensing conditions, licensees must arrange a sufficient number of qualified life-saving attendants to be on duty during the opening hours of the pools. The qualifications of life-saving attendants are assessed by the Hong Kong China Life Saving Society, which issues PLAs featuring the life-saving attendant's name and photograph to those who qualify. At present, there are about 1 400 licensed private swimming pools across the territory. The FEHD has required licensees to display at a conspicuous location of pool entrances the required number of life-saving attendants during the opening hours of swimming pools, as well as recent photographs, names and PLA numbers of the life-saving attendants on duty. This empowers pool users to take part in the monitoring of swimming pools. Licensees are also required to keep duty logs of life-saving attendants for at least 90 days for inspection by the FEHD.

The spokesman said that the FEHD will consult relevant stakeholders and continue to monitor and review relevant enhancement measures in a timely manner.