

Latest directions under Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation and Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation

The COVID-19 pandemic remains severe around the globe. As of noon on April 7, the number of cases reported globally had exceeded 1.25 million. Meanwhile, the number of local confirmed cases as at noon on April 7 had reached 936 (including one probable case), a drastic increase from the number of 387 confirmed cases a fortnight ago. Many of the cases are locally acquired infections without travel history.

In view of the above, the Government will continue to introduce measures to regulate catering business premises, scheduled premises and prohibit group gatherings to curb local transmission. In accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (The Regulation) (Cap. 599F) and the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) ("the Regulations"), the Secretary for Food and Health (SFH) has issued latest directions through notices in the Gazette today (April 8) to be effective for 14 days from 0.00am on April 10, 2020 till April 23, 2020.

The notices seek to achieve four objectives –

(A) Extend the following requirements imposed on all catering businesses to April 23, 2020 –

- (a) the number of customers at any premises on which food or drink is sold or supplied for consumption on the premises (catering premises) at any one time must not exceed 50% of the normal seating capacity of the premises;
- (b) tables available for use or being used by customers within any catering premises must be arranged in a way to ensure there is a distance of at least 1.5 metres or some form of partition which could serve as effective buffer between one table and another table at the premises;
- (c) no more than 4 persons may be seated together at one table within any catering premises;
- (d) a person must wear a mask at any time within any catering premises, except when the person is consuming food or drink on the premises;
- (e) body temperature screening on a person must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the catering premises;
- (f) hand sanitisers must be provided at any catering premises for any person at the premises;
- (g) all karaoke and mahjong-tin kau activities at all catering premises

should be suspended;

(h) any premises (commonly known as bar or pub) that is exclusively or mainly used for the sale or supply of intoxicating liquors for consumption in that premises must be closed; and

(i) where a catering business sells or supplies food or drink for consumption on the premises, any part of the premises that is exclusively or mainly used for the sale or supply of intoxicating liquors for consumption in that part must be closed.

(B) Direct that beauty parlours and massage establishments be closed and extend the closure of other Scheduled Premises list in Cap 599F to April 23, 2020 –

The following premises must be closed –

(a) Amusement game centres

(b) Bathhouses

(c) Fitness centres

(d) Places of amusement

(e) Places of public entertainment

(f) Premises that are maintained or intended to be maintained for hire for holding social gatherings (commonly known as party room)

(g) beauty parlours (added)

(h) establishments (commonly known as club or nightclub) that are open late into the night, usually for drinking, and dancing or other entertainment

(i) karaoke establishments

(j) mahjong-tin kau premises

(k) massage establishments (except premises at Annex 1) (added)

(C) Extend the following requirements imposed on all club-houses to April 23, 2020 –

(a) all karaoke and mahjong-tin kau activities carried on therein must be suspended;

(b) a person must wear a mask at any time within the club-house, where applicable and except when the person is consuming food or drink on the premises;

(c) body temperature screening on a person must be conducted before the person is allowed to enter the club-house; and

(d) hand sanitisers must be provided at the club-house for any person at the premise.

(D) The prohibition of group gatherings with more than four people in public places under Cap. 599G will remain in force until April 23, 2020.

A spokesperson for the Food and Health Bureau said that according to the latest directions issued by the SFH today, the effective period of all the aforementioned requirements under the directions will be standardised. A summary on the latest directions is at Annex 2.

All of the other directions earlier issued by the SFH in accordance to the Regulations (i.e. the directions effective on March 28, March 29, April 1

and April 3 respectively) will be suspended on April 10 procedurally.

The spokesperson reminds the persons responsible for carrying on the catering business and the managers of scheduled premises that contravening the above requirements would be a criminal offence. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

Separately, any person who participates in a prohibited group gathering; organises a prohibited group gathering; owns, controls or operates the place of the gathering; and knowingly allows the taking place of the gathering, commits an offence. Offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for six months. Persons who participate in a prohibited group gathering may discharge liability for the offence by paying a fixed penalty of \$2,000.

The spokesperson said that the Government has been reviewing the feasibility of relevant measures and will make timely adjustments in view of the latest developments of the disease. The above directions could help further enhance social distancing.