

“Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector” under “Anti-epidemic Fund” continues to disburse subsidies

A Government spokesman today (April 2) said that the Property Management Services Authority (PMSA), which has been commissioned to implement the "Anti-epidemic Support Scheme for Property Management Sector" (ASPM), has been receiving more applications from property management (PM) companies or owners' organisations. As of April 1, the PMSA has received about 2 500 applications, covering about 20 000 frontline PM workers. The PMSA also notes that applications from more large residential estates are now under preparation and will soon be submitted. The PMSA is proactively speeding up the examination and approval work, with a view to disbursing the subsidies earlier, such that frontline PM workers, PM companies or owners' organisations, and residents can benefit from the scheme as soon as practicable. 315 applications have already been approved, involving subsidies of around \$8.7 million and benefiting over 2 000 building blocks. The name of the properties for which applications have been approved has been uploaded to the website of the PMSA.

"The application deadline for the ASPM is April 15. Eligible PM companies or owners' organisations should submit the applications for their respective properties and the frontline PM workers they engage as soon as practicable. There is no need for individual frontline PM workers to make the application, so as to save them from the additional burden in preparing the relevant documents," the Government spokesman emphasised.

The stepping up of the cleansing efforts in residential buildings is crucial to minimising the risks of virus infection and spreading in local community. The frontline PM workers serving these private residential buildings have been under immense pressure. Their workload has been increasing substantially and they are facing much higher health risks given their very frequent contacts with residents during their daily work. Some of them may even be working in buildings with residents under 'home quarantine'. The additional cleansing efforts have created imminent burdens to PM companies and owners' organisations. Through the ASPM, we would provide urgent financial support to the frontline PM workers, and PM companies or owners' organisations, so as to help them better cope with the present public health challenge and would directly benefit the residents in Hong Kong. Each residential and composite (i.e. commercial cum residential) building block may receive a maximum subsidy of \$26,000 under the ASPM.

For details on the ASPM, please contact the PMSA at 3696 1156 or 3696 1166, or visit the website of the PMSA (www.pmsahk.org.hk/en/index.html).

CHP investigates 37 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (April 2), the CHP is investigating 37 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 803 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 802 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 21 males and 16 females aged between two and 71. Among them, 30 had travel history during the incubation period and 17 are overseas students. The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see the Annex.

The CHP urged members of the public to maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible in their daily lives. In particular, they should go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings to reduce the chance of contacting infected persons, who may not present any symptoms, and minimise the risk of outbreak clusters emerging in the community.

A spokesman for the CHP said, "In view of proliferation of the disease and continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong."

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes."

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, and regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps); cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use; after using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

The CHP will report the cases to the World Health Organization, National Health Commission, Health Commission of Guangdong Province, relevant health authorities and the Hospital Authority.

The CHP has set up the hotlines (2125 1111 and 2125 1122), which operate

from 8am to midnight daily, for public enquiries. As at 4pm today, a total of 78 546 calls were received.

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on the COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
- Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a liter of water into each drain outlet (U-traps) to ensure environmental hygiene;
- Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
- After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
- Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.

Update on COVID-19 test centres

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

From March 20 to 9pm today (April 2), 860 and 184 people have been referred to the test centres at the AsiaWorld-Expo and North Lantau Hospital respectively for COVID-19 viral test. So far, 940 people have negative test results for COVID-19 and have returned to their residence to continue the home quarantine.

Preliminary positive test results will be further confirmed by the Department of Health and announced as confirmed cases in due course.

North District Hospital announces cluster of Multidrug-resistant Acinetobacter (MDRA)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The spokesperson for North District Hospital (NDH) made the following announcement today (April 2):

Since March 22, seven female patients (aged 66 to 95) of a medical ward have been confirmed to be carriers of Multidrug-resistant Acinetobacter (MDRA). All the patients are currently under isolation. Four of them are in stable condition. Two are in serious condition and one is in critical condition due to their underlying diseases.

Following the activation of Emergency Response Level in public hospitals, visiting arrangement has been suspended. The following infection control measures have been stepped up according to established guidelines:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned
2. Enhance patient and environmental screening procedures
3. Apply stringent contact precautions and enhance hand hygiene of staff and patients

All other patients in the ward are under close medical surveillance. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow up.

Latest directions under Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises)

Regulation

In view of the emergence of 62 confirmed COVID-19 cases related to the bar and band cluster with further spread to additional 14 secondary, tertiary and quaternary cases (including a 40-day old infant) who had not visited any bar, the Government will introduce new measures to regulate businesses that sell or supply intoxicating liquors for on-site consumption. In accordance with the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (The Regulation) (Cap. 599F), the Secretary for Food and Health (SFH) has issued directions through notices in the Gazette today (April 2) to be effective for 14 days from 6pm on April 3, 2020 (i.e. till 5.59pm on April 17), such that –

(a) any premises (commonly known as bar or pub) that is exclusively or mainly used for the sale or supply of intoxicating liquors as defined in section 53(1) of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) ("intoxicating liquors") for consumption in that premises must be closed;

(b) any part of a catering business premise that is exclusively or mainly used for the sale or supply of intoxicating liquors for consumption in that part must be closed; and

(c) any area in a club-house that is exclusively or mainly used for the sale or supply of intoxicating liquors for consumption in that area must be closed.

A spokesperson for the Food and Health Bureau 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.

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. A summary on the latest instructions issued by SFH in accordance with the Regulation and the earlier directions issued on March 28 and April 1 are at Annex.

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) urges members of the public to go out less and avoid social activities such as meal gatherings or other gatherings and maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible.

The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear surgical masks when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially

before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

The Department of Health will closely monitor the situation. Any updates will be issued through the media, the Government's "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html) and the DH's webpage (www.gov.hk/ncv). Any enquiries on health information on COVID-19 may be addressed to the DH's hotline at (852) 2125 1122 (operating daily from 8am to midnight).