

Labour Department again appeals to foreign domestic helpers to refrain from gathering and crowding in public places

The Labour Department (LD) today (March 27) again appealed to foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) to refrain from gathering and crowding in public places and stay at home for rest on their rest days as far as possible to safeguard their personal health and reduce the risk of the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

The spokesman of the department said, "In response to the COVID-19 infection, to safeguard FDHs' personal health, LD issued a press release on January 30 to appeal to FDHs to stay at home for rest on their rest days as far as possible and stay away from crowds on public transport or at public places. In view of the recent changes in circumstances of the epidemic in Hong Kong, the Government announced on March 23 further enhancements to our anti-epidemic measures. LD again appeals to FDHs to maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene at all times, avoid going out for social activities on rest days such as meal gatherings, and maintain an appropriate social distance with other people as far as possible. The Government notes that the consulates-general of FDHs' home countries have similarly appealed to their nationals to stay at home whenever possible, avoid crowded places and practise social distancing."

The spokesman continued, "FDHs may consider discussing rest day arrangements with their employers, including substituting another rest day, so as to avoid the health risk of gathering in crowded places. Under the Employment Ordinance, if an employer requests an FDH to work on a rest day, the employer must substitute another rest day for the FDH within 30 days after the original rest day; the employer must also notify the FDH of the arrangement within 48 hours after he/she is required to work. LD appeals to employers to explain the current special circumstances when discussing rest day arrangements with their FDHs and calls for their mutual understanding in joining hands to fight the virus. LD also reminds employers again that an employer who compels his/her FDH to work on a rest day without the agreement of the FDH or fails to grant rest days to the FDH is in breach of the Employment Ordinance and is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000."

For health advice on the prevention of pneumonia and respiratory tract infection, please visit the website of the Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/). Information in Chinese, English, Tagalog, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai, Hindi, Sinhala, Bengali, Nepali and Urdu are available.

Should FDHs and their employers have enquiries on employment matters,

they may seek LD's assistance through the dedicated email account for FDH matters (fdh-enquiry@labour.gov.hk) and the online form on the dedicated portal (www.fdh.labour.gov.hk).

Government approves six more production lines under Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau announced today (March 27) that it has approved the following five applications (involving six production lines) under the Local Mask Production Subsidy Scheme:

(1) Step Out Technology Limited has been approved for obtaining subsidy for one production line, which is expected to supply an average of 2 million masks to the Government every month starting from April 10, and produce a further 20 000 masks for the local market on average every month. The production line may receive a subsidy of up to \$2.5 million.

(2) Wilson Tech (International) Limited has been approved for obtaining subsidy for one production line, which is expected to supply an average of 1.5 million masks to the Government every month starting from April 14. The production line may receive a subsidy of up to \$2 million.

(3) S.E.C. Hong Kong Factory Limited has been approved for obtaining subsidy for one production line, which is expected to supply an average of 1 million masks to the Government every month starting from April 15. The production line may receive a subsidy of up to \$2 million.

(4) Platform Management Service Limited has been approved for obtaining subsidy for one production line, which is expected to supply an average of 1.5 million masks to the Government every month starting from April 30. The production line may receive a subsidy of up to \$2 million.

(5) Creative International Technology Limited has been approved for obtaining subsidy for two production lines, each of which is expected to supply an average of 2 million masks to the Government every month starting from May 2. The two production lines may receive subsidies of up to \$2.5 million and \$1.5 million respectively.

The actual subsidy amount for each of the abovementioned production line under the Scheme is contingent upon the actual expenditure for production equipment and setting up the venue and clean room facilities, as well as testing and standards compliance, and will be finalised when the expenditure is confirmed.

Together with the two production lines approved last week, a total of eight production lines have been approved under the Scheme. The Scheme will provide subsidies to a maximum of 20 local production lines, and there remains a subsidy quota of 12 production lines. Having reviewed the information provided in the applications received so far, the Government estimated that the number of potentially eligible production lines would very likely have exceeded the remaining quota. Therefore, the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) who is administering the Scheme has stopped receiving applications from today. Pursuant to the provisions in the application guide, the Government will allocate the remaining quota to production lines according to their expected starting dates for supplying masks to the Government.

As of yesterday (March 26), the Scheme attracted a total of 103 applications. Among them, seven applications (involving eight production lines) have been approved; four applications (involving five production lines), after verification, have been confirmed to have met all eligibility criteria of the Scheme; the eligibility of 23 applications (involving 33 production lines) is being verified by the HKPC through document check and on-site inspection; and the remaining 69 applications have yet to meet all eligibility criteria.

The Government launched the Scheme under the Anti-epidemic Fund to facilitate local production of masks as soon as possible to help address the imminent shortage as well as to build up stock.

OGCIO clarifies online rumours

In response to online rumours about potential security risk in the StayHomeSafe system, a spokesman for the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer made the following clarification today (March 27):

The StayHomeSafe (SHS) system is resided on Government private cloud platform. All data collected via the SHS system are stored on Government private cloud and protected by multiple layers of defense to ensure information security.

The SHS system has undergone security and privacy assessment and audit before launch. The SHS mobile app has also passed relevant reviews before it is put on the respective app stores.

The app requires only users' phone numbers for registration purpose. No other personal data will be collected.

CHP investigates 43 additional cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 4pm today (March 26), the CHP is investigating 43 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19, taking the number of cases to 454 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 453 confirmed cases and one probable case).

The newly reported cases announced today involve 18 males and 25 females aged between 18 and 78. Among them, 29 had travel history during the incubation period. 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.

For information on flights that patients of the confirmed cases have taken, please refer to the following webpage: (www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/flights_trains_en.pdf). Passengers who travelled on the same flights and sat within two seats surrounding those patients are urged to call the CHP hotlines 2125 1111 and 2125 1122.

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.

In particular, the CHP reminded those who have returned to Hong Kong from overseas or visited overseas before the Compulsory Quarantine of Persons Arriving at Hong Kong from Foreign Places Regulation (Cap. 599E) took effect on March 19 that, although they are not subject to the 14-day compulsory quarantine, they should stay home and avoid going out as far as possible for 14 days. They should wear surgical mask, maintain stringent personal hygiene as a measure to protect themselves and their family members. They should seek medical advice as soon as possible if symptoms develop to safeguard the health of themselves, family and friends as well as the general public.

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 58 658 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.

Second batch of chartered flights safely bring back Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei (with photos/videos)

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government today (March 26) arranged two more chartered flights to bring back 277 Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province to Hong Kong. Together with the 281 Hong Kong residents who took the chartered flights back yesterday (March 25), the HKSAR Government has brought back a total of 558 Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province in this second batch operation.

On board the two chartered flights today are 104 Hong Kong people stranded in Xiaogan and 138 in Xianning, as well as 35 people in other cities such as Yichang, Shiyan and Enshi, etc. in Hubei Province, who have urgent needs to return to Hong Kong. Among them, there were pregnant women, people suffering from serious illnesses and a student sitting for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examination.

There were 10 people aged 60 or above, 66 aged 16 or below, and among them, 11 were children aged three or below, joining the flights today. A family member of a child joined the first chartered flight to Wuhan to accompany the child to return to Hong Kong.

A total of 47 staff members from the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau, the Immigration Department, the Department of Health (DH), the Information Services Department and the Hospital Authority joined the operation today and took the second chartered flight back to Hong Kong.

All people who were taking the chartered flights back to Hong Kong have undergone health assessment by staff of the DH at an early stage to check whether they have developed symptoms such as fever. The Hubei Provincial Government also conducted verification to ascertain that all who were allowed to board the flight were not confirmed cases or suspected cases of COVID-19, and were not close contacts of confirmed patients. All of them had to undergo temperature checks at different stops, i.e., before they departed their home, when they arrived at the airport in Wuhan, during the immigration process and before boarding the plane, so as to ensure that they were not having fever, or developing abnormal vital signs, respiratory tract symptoms and other signs of infectious diseases.

After returning to Hong Kong, they were required to undergo temperature check again and started home quarantine for 14 days in accordance with the

Compulsory Quarantine of Certain Persons Arriving at Hong Kong Regulation (Cap. 599C).

The second two-day mission of bringing back Hong Kong residents stranded in Hubei Province has been concluded successfully. The HKSAR Government expressed gratitude to the care expressed by the Central Government and the support and co-operation by the Hubei Provincial Government and other municipal governments of the Province.

The HKSAR Government also expressed gratitude to Cathay Pacific and Cathay Dragon for arranging the chartered flights and the meticulous arrangements by the cabin crew who took part in this mission. The Government also thanked all public officers who have planned and carried out this mission.



