

LCQ11: Filter masks produced by Correctional Services Department

Following is a question by Dr Hon Helena Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

The Government stated on February 1 this year that before the occurrence of the novel coronavirus epidemic, the Correctional Services Department (CSD) had supplied face masks produced by it to certain non-governmental organisations (NGOs). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the quantity of face masks produced by CSD last year; among them, the quantity of those supplied to NGOs, with a breakdown by name of NGO; and

(2) whether NGOs are required to pay for the face masks supplied; if so, of the criteria for determining the charges; if not, whether the Government has established a mechanism for monitoring the use of such face masks to prevent such face masks from being sold for profits or transferred to non-specified users; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Filter masks produced by the Correctional Services Department (CSD) are mainly supplied to the Government Logistics Department (GLD) for allocation to government departments. My reply to Dr Hon Helena Wong's question is as follows:

(1) In 2019, CSD produced about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average, which were mainly supplied to GLD. Moreover, some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as social welfare organisations and schools procured a total of about 120 000 masks during the year from CSD, amounting to less than 1 per cent of the total production. CSD is unable to disclose details of the NGOs which procured masks from it as third party information is involved.

In the light of the development of COVID-19 infection, there is a rapid increase in demand for filter masks from government departments. As such, CSD has ceased to take orders other than from GLD since January 2020. Moreover, the mask production facilities in Lo Wu Correctional Institution gradually increased the production and has reached 24-hour operation. CSD has also recruited over 1 200 off-duty or retired CSD officers as volunteers to participate in the production of masks, increasing the production to about

2.5 million masks per month. Among them, 1.8 million masks are supplied to GLD, whereas the remaining 700 000 masks are set aside for distribution to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleaning service contractors through relevant departments (including the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Housing Department, Government Property Agency, Marine Department, Customs and Excise Department (in respect of the Shenzhen Bay Port Hong Kong Port Area)).

(2) The price of the masks sold to NGOs is determined by cost, which is about \$0.13 each. The handling of the masks after-sales rests upon the NGOs which procured them.

LCQ7: Face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-chun and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

Regarding the face masks produced by the Correctional Services Department (CSD), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (i) the quantity of face masks produced by the CSD, and (ii) the respective quantities of such face masks supplied to the various government departments and non-governmental organisations, in each month of the past three years;

(2) of the respective quantities of face masks currently kept in the stock of the various government departments, and whether, to avoid hoarding, such departments have set a limit on the quantity of face masks kept in the stock;

(3) of the mechanism adopted by the Government for determining the quantities of face masks to be allocated to various government departments, and how such departments handle those face masks which will not be used before the expiry dates; and

(4) as the Chief Executive has indicated that the 700 000 face masks per month made available by the CSD's increased production will be given to cleansing service contractors for use by the cleaning workers hired by them, of the relevant details?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Correctional Services Department (CSD), the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (PICO) and the Government Logistics Department (GLD), our consolidated reply to the four parts of the question raised by Hon Shiu Ka-chun is as follows:

(1) Filter masks produced by the CSD are mainly supplied to the GLD for allocation to government departments. From 2017 to 2019, the CSD supplied about 1.1 million filter masks per month on average to the GLD; the GLD supplied roughly the same quantity to government departments.

Moreover, non-governmental organisations such as social welfare agencies and schools procured about 150 000 masks per year on average from the CSD from 2017 to 2019. In the light of the developments of COVID-19, there has been a rapid increase in the demand for filter masks from government departments. As such, the CSD has ceased to take orders from parties other than the GLD since January 2020.

(2) and (3) Based on the broad estimates, the current stock of masks at the GLD is sufficient for operational use by government departments for more than two months. In light of the developments concerning the disease, all government departments have worked very hard to reduce their demands for masks. The GLD will comply strictly with the Government's internal guidelines and accord priority to front-line staff participating in quarantine-related work, execution of quarantine orders (including medical and port health staff of the Department of Health) and maintenance of essential public services. The GLD will review the demand for and stock of masks from time to time.

Moreover, when departments manage stores items with a shelf-life (including masks), they should conduct regular monitoring to ensure that the stores will be consumed before the expiry dates. If departments are unlikely to consume the stores before expiry, they should consult other departments through the GLD to transfer the stores, where appropriate.

(4) The Government understands that outsourced cleansing service contractors have encountered difficulties in procuring masks. To protect the health of cleansing workers and maintain environmental hygiene, the Chief Executive announced on February 8 that the CSD would increase the production of an additional 700 000 masks, which would be set aside for distributing to cleansing workers engaged by outsourced cleansing service contractors as a temporary measure to relieve the imminent need.

The PICO co-ordinates the aforementioned measure of mask distribution. Starting from February 17, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Housing Department have started distributing masks to cleansing workers. Priority was given to those front-line cleansing workers who are responsible for cleaning streets, public toilets, refuse collection points, public markets and public housing estates. Each worker receives one mask per day before work. Some of the masks have also been provided to front-line cleansing workers through the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the

control points at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and Shenzhen Bay and the Marine Department.

The aforementioned measure is expected to benefit over 21 000 front-line cleansing workers of government contractors.

LCQ21: Implementation of amendments made to Nurses Registration Ordinance

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (March 18):

Question:

It is learnt that since 1997, the nursing sector has been advocating the enhancement of the credibility, transparency and governance capabilities of the Nursing Council of Hong Kong (NCHK) as well as the achievement of the aim of professional autonomy through the introduction of amendments to the Nurses Registration Ordinance (Cap. 164). In June 1997, the former Legislative Council passed the amendments to the Ordinance, which included the addition of section 3(2)(ca) to stipulate that six of the members of NCHK shall be elected among registered nurses and enrolled nurses in a manner provided for by the Ordinance. However, that provision has not yet been implemented so far. In addition, the Government indicated in May 2018 that according to legal advice, further amendments to Cap.164 were needed before the subsidiary legislation for the election of the aforesaid six members could be introduced. The authorities would invite NCHK to submit proposals to follow up the recommendations in the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development published by the Government in 2017 and related matters. The issue of that provision not having been implemented would then be dealt with together. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of the latest progress of the follow-up work undertaken by the authorities for implementing that provision, as well as the timetable for the implementation of that provision?

Reply:

President,

In June 2017, the Government published the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development (the Strategic Review). The Food and Health Bureau subsequently wrote to invite the Nursing Council of Hong Kong (NCHK) in April and July 2018 respectively to follow up and submit proposals on the development of nursing specialties

and the recommendations put forward in the Strategic Review, which include ensuring lay involvement in the NCHK, making continuing professional education and/or continuing professional development a mandatory requirement, and reviewing the mechanisms for complaint investigation and disciplinary inquiry, etc.

The NCHK is following up on the above issues. After receiving proposals from the NCHK, the Government will conduct a comprehensive review of the Nurses Registration Ordinance having regard to the situation of the nursing profession, present circumstances, international practices, and possible legislative amendments arising from the implementation of the proposals. The issue of the outstanding provisions of the Nurses Registration (Amendment) Ordinance 1997 will then be dealt with together.

MD announcement

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

The Marine Department today (March 18) reminded masters, coxswains and persons-in-charge of vessels navigating in Hong Kong waters to proceed at a safe speed and exercise extreme caution because restricted visibility of less than 2 nautical miles has been reported.

Appropriate sound signals shall be made when underway or at anchor. All vessels must comply with the International Regulations for Preventing Collision at Sea.

Also, when radar is used without the benefit of adequate plotting facilities, the information obtained from the equipment is rather limited and should be construed accordingly.

Visibility reports are broadcast by the Vessel Traffic Centre (VTC) on VHF channels 02, 12, 14, 63 and 67.

In the event of an accident, a report shall be made immediately to the VTC at Tel: 2233 7801.

Employers, contractors and employees should be aware of electrical safety at work during rainstorm

As the rainstorm warning has been issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, the Labour Department (LD) reminds employers and contractors that they should adopt necessary work arrangements and take suitable safety measures to protect the safety of their employees when they are carrying out electrical work or handling electrical plant.

A spokesman for the LD said today (March 18) that employers and contractors should avoid assigning employees to carry out electrical work (like electric arc welding work) or handle electrical plant at places affected by rainstorms, and should refer to the "Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms" and the "Guide on Safety at Work in times of Inclement Weather" issued by the LD.

Even if electrical work is carried out or electrical plant is handled at places not affected by the rainstorm, suitable safety measures must still be adopted to prevent electric shock as the air would be more humid. Such measures include:

- (i) Ensure that all live parts of an electrical installation are isolated from the power supply source and rendered dead, and the isolation from the power supply source must be maintained as long as electrical work is being carried out;
- (ii) Before carrying out any electrical work or handling any electrical plant, cut off and lock out the power supply source, then test the circuit concerned to confirm it is dead and display suitable warning notices, and issue a work permit thereafter;
- (iii) Ensure that protective devices (such as suitable and adequate fuses and circuit breakers) for the electrical installations or electrical plant have been installed and maintained in good working order, and portable electric tools must be double-insulated or properly earthed;
- (iv) Provide suitable personal protective equipment such as insulating gloves and insulating mats for employees; and
- (v) If live electrical work is unavoidable, a comprehensive risk assessment should be conducted by a competent person and the appropriate safety precautions should be taken to remove or properly control the electrical hazards involved before such work can proceed.

In addition, employees should co-operate with the employer or contractor to follow the safety instructions and use the safety equipment provided.

The LD has published guidebooks and leaflets on electrical work safety.

These safety publications are available free from divisional offices of the department or can be downloaded from its website (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_8.htm).

Should there be any questions about occupational safety and health matters, please contact the Occupational Safety Officer of the LD at 2559 2297.