

Update of investigation into a cluster of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (March 4) announced an update on its investigation into a cluster of Legionnaires' disease (LD) cases involving 15 patients reported in February.

The cluster of LD cases, which was announced on February 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 17, 18 and 29, involves a total to 12 male and three female patients aged 52 to 94. The patients' respiratory specimens were positive for *Legionella pneumophila* serogroup 1 (Lp1) upon laboratory testing.

"Our laboratory investigations show that respiratory specimens of eight patients of the cluster and two water samples collected from cooling towers at the Choi Hung MTR station before disinfection were of the same sequence type of Lp1. Investigations suggest that the cooling towers could be source of infection of this outbreak," A spokesman for the CHP said.

"Upon laboratory testing, water samples collected from four cooling towers at the Choi Hung MTR station after disinfection revealed concentration of *Legionella pneumophila* below the action level." A spokesman for the CHP added.

As of February 29 this year, 27 LD cases had been reported. In 2019 and 2018, there were 105 cases each year.

First batch of Hong Kong residents on board Diamond Princess cruise to complete quarantine after returning to Hong Kong

The first batch of 108 passengers of the Diamond Princess cruise returning to Hong Kong will finish their 14-day quarantine at 11.59pm tonight (March 4). Among them, except two confirmed cases of COVID-19 receiving treatment at hospital, the remaining 106 passengers may leave Chun Yeung Estate quarantine camp in Fo Tan tonight. Transportation will be arranged to take them to designated location for dismissal.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government arranged three chartered flights to Japan from February 20 to 23 for taking back Hong Kong

residents on board the Diamond Princess cruise. Together with those returning to Hong Kong on their own by taking other flights, the number of Diamond Princess cruise passengers under quarantine at Chun Yeung Estate quarantine camp is 225.

During the quarantine period, persons under quarantine are required to measure their own body temperature on a daily basis to monitor their health condition. Health care staff are on duty round-the-clock. If fever or other symptoms arise, they will be arranged for management in hospital if necessary upon assessment. So far, nine Hong Kong residents returning from the cruise were confirmed cases of COVID-19 while one was classified as a probable case. All patients are in a stable condition. For the remaining 100 odd persons, most of them will complete their compulsory quarantine from March 5 to 7.

Low-level of infection with COVID-19 in Pet Dog

A spokesman for the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said today (March 4) that a pet dog had repeatedly tested weak positive for COVID-19 virus which indicates a low-level of infection with the virus.

The AFCD first collected samples from the dog for tests on February 26, and detected low levels of COVID-19 virus from its nasal and oral cavity samples on February 27. The Department repeated the test on February 28 and March 2, and the dog's nasal and oral cavity samples, and nasal samples, respectively, tested weak positive for the virus. Experts from the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) have been consulted, and unanimously agreed that these results suggest that the dog has a low-level of infection and it is likely to be a case of human-to-animal transmission. The dog has not shown any signs of disease related to COVID-19. It is currently under quarantine at the animal keeping facility at the Hong Kong Port of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge.

There are two dogs under quarantine at the animal keeping facility at the Hong Kong Port of Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge at the moment, which are staying in individual rooms. The other dog tested negative for COVID-19 virus. The Department has stepped up cleansing and disinfection of the facility.

The Department will continue to closely monitor the dog which tested weak positive for COVID-19 virus and repeat the test later. It will only be returned to its owner when the test result is negative. The other dog which

tested negative for the virus will be tested again before release. To ensure public and animal health, the Department strongly advises that mammalian pet animals including dogs and cats from households with persons confirmed as infected with COVID-19, or close contacts of COVID-19 infected persons, should be put under quarantine in AFCD facilities.

COVID-19 is a newly emerged disease and the situation is still evolving. The AFCD will continue to work together with the Department of Health in handling relevant cases.

The spokesman reminded pet owners to adopt good hygiene practices (including hand washing before and after being around or handling animals, their food, or supplies, as well as avoiding kissing them) and to maintain a clean and hygienic household environment. People who are sick should restrict contacting animals. If there are any changes in the health condition of the pets, advice from a veterinarian should be sought as soon as possible.

The spokesman emphasised that there is currently no evidence that pet animals can be a source of infection of COVID-19 or that they become sick. Apart from maintaining good hygiene practices, pet owners need not be overly concerned and under no circumstances should they abandon their pets.

[CE visits Hong Mei House at Cheung Hong Estate in Tsing Yi \(with photos/video\)](#)

The Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam, visited Cheung Hong Estate in Tsing Yi today (March 4) to inspect Hong Mei House, where confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving residents of units on different floors were reported earlier. She also met with personnel of the Housing Department (HD), the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and the Police to thank them for their tireless efforts in doing follow-up work to safeguard public health.

Accompanied by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, Mrs Lam met with personnel of the HD, the HAD and the Police at Hong Mei House to learn about their experience in the operation to evacuate the relevant residents, providing assistance to the Department of Health (DH) in investigating the source of infection and enforcement of a series of infection control measures last month.

After noting that there were confirmed cases in the same units on different floors of Hong Mei House in the evening on February 10, the Government immediately conducted a site visit with experts, investigated the health of about 100 residents in the units and activated a multi-disciplinary

response team to formulate and execute necessary infection control measures. According to the advice of the experts, as a precautionary measure, members of the HAD immediately arranged for residents of the relevant units to be transferred to quarantine centres temporarily in the evening; the technical team of the HD and personnel of the DH investigated the drainage system in each of the units in the following days and took immediate action for rectification works; personnel of the HD and the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) carried out thorough cleaning and disinfection at the building; and the DH arranged virus tests for residents in the quarantine centres and all samples tested negative. With the close collaboration of the relevant departments, all residents in the quarantine centres could go back home on February 15.

Mrs Lam also went to the ground floor lobby of Hong Mei House to chat with security workers and cleaning workers who participated in the operation. Mrs Lam expressed her gratitude to them for their committed services provided during this critical period, adding that the Anti-epidemic Fund of the Government will support the efforts of government and Hong Kong Housing Authority service contractors to fight the disease, including providing each cleaning worker, toilet attendant and security worker engaged under relevant contracts with a monthly allowance of \$1,000 for no fewer than four months to strengthen their capacity for personal and environmental hygiene. Mrs Lam then viewed the units with confirmed cases and their drainage system from outside the building.

"Since the outbreak of infection months ago, the Government has been closely monitoring the development of the situation and has responded comprehensively with decisive and appropriate measures. The cases of infection in Hong Mei House were among the unforeseen incidents that the Government faced in the process. I would like to thank colleagues of the HD, the HAD, the FEHD, the Police and many other government departments for joining hands to enforce the relevant measures swiftly to safeguard public health and provide appropriate support to the people affected. Although the situation of infection in the community is still severe, given the commitment and concerted efforts of all the incumbent and retired colleagues of various government departments that I have witnessed, I am confident that Hong Kong can win the battle against the disease," Mrs Lam said.





Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at noon today (March 4), public hospitals had reported to the Department of Health the admission of 43 patients (20 male and 23 female, aged 22 to 92) in the past 24 hours who met the reporting criteria of COVID-19. Appropriate tests have been arranged for the patients.

There are 110 patients under isolation currently. So far, 43 patients with the COVID-19 infection have been discharged upon recovery.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.