

## Tender closing time extended due to special work arrangement

The Central Tender Board announced today (February 14) that the closing time for tenders, which should originally have been received through the Government Secretariat Tender Box by noon on January 31 and February 7, will be extended "until noon today". The Government Secretariat Tender Box is located at the ground floor of the East Wing, Central Government Offices, "2 Tim Mei Avenue", Tamar, Hong Kong.

For enquiries, please call "2810 2497" "between 9am and 6pm" "from Monday to Friday".

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## Flag-raising ceremony cancelled

Owing to the thunderstorm warning, the flag-raising ceremony to be conducted at Golden Bauhinia Square, Wan Chai at 8am today (February 14) will be cancelled.

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## 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 (Feb 14) 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.

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## CHP investigates cluster of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 13) investigating a cluster of Legionnaires' disease (LD) cases involving 11 patients and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems and that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

Further to the CHP's announcements on a cluster of LD cases on February 1, 3, 6, 7, 10 and 11, one additional LD case relevant to the cluster has been recorded today, acculminating a total of nine male and two female patients aged 65 to 84.

The 11th patient is an 82-year-old man who lives in Kam Hon House, Choi Hung Estate, Wong Tai Sin. The patient's sample tested positive for *Legionella pneumophila*.

"Epidemiological investigations revealed that while two patients had travelled to Macao and Shenzhen respectively, the other nine patients had no travel history in the incubation period. All of them had underlying illnesses and live in Wong Tai Sin district," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Water samples and environmental swabs were collected from the patients' flats and vicinities to test for legionella in a series of joint site visits by the CHP and the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department on the possible source of infection.

Upon laboratory testing, water samples collected from three out of the four cooling towers at the Choi Hung MTR station revealed presence of *Legionella pneumophila* above the action levels

According to the MTR Corporation Limited, disinfection of the cooling towers concerned were performed on February 4 and 12. In view of the high count of *Legionella pneumophila* in the water samples collected before the disinfection on February 4, as precautionary measure, the company was advised to suspend operation of all four cooling towers, to clean and disinfect the system today. Water samples would be collected again to ascertain effectiveness of the disinfection.

"Men, people aged over 50, smokers, alcoholics and persons with weakened immunity are more susceptible to LD. Some situations may also increase the risk of infection including poor maintenance of water systems leading to stagnant water; living in areas with old water systems, cooling towers or fountains; using electric water heaters, whirlpools and spas or hot water spring spas; and recent stays in hotels or vessels," the spokesman said.

Legionellae are found in various environmental settings and grow well in warm water (20 to 45 degrees Celsius). They can be found in aqueous environments such as water tanks, hot and cold water systems, cooling towers, whirlpools and spas, water fountains and home apparatus which support breathing. People may become infected when they breathe in contaminated droplets (aerosols) and mist generated by artificial water systems, or when handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes.

Immunocompromised persons should:

- Use sterile or boiled water for drinking, tooth brushing and mouth rinsing;
- Avoid using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices. A shower may also generate small aerosols; and
- If using humidifiers, or other mist- or aerosol-generating devices, fill the water tank with only sterile or cooled freshly boiled water, and not water directly from the tap. Also, clean and maintain humidifiers/devices regularly according to manufacturers' instructions. Never leave stagnant water in a humidifier/device. Empty the water tank, wipe all surfaces dry, and change the water daily.

The public should observe the health advice below:

- Observe personal hygiene;
- Do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption;
- Strainers in water taps and shower heads should be inspected, cleaned, descaled and disinfected regularly or at a frequency recommended by the manufacturer;
- If a fresh water plumbing system is properly maintained, it is not necessary to install domestic water filters. Use of water filters is not encouraged as clogging occurs easily, which can promote growth of micro-organisms. In case water filters are used, the pore size should be 0.2 micrometres ( $\mu\text{m}$ ) and the filter needs to be changed periodically according to the manufacturer's recommendations;
- Drain and clean water tanks of buildings at least quarterly;
- Drain or purge for at least one minute infrequently used water outlets (e.g. water taps, shower heads and hot water outlets) and stagnant points of the pipework weekly or before use;
- Seek and follow doctors' professional advice regarding the use and maintenance of home respiratory devices and use only sterile water (not distilled or tap water) to clean and fill the reservoir. Clean and maintain the device regularly according to the manufacturer's instructions. After cleaning/disinfection, rinse the device with sterile water, cooled freshly boiled water or water filtered with 0.2  $\mu\text{m}$  filters. Never leave stagnant water in the device. Empty the water tank, keep all surfaces dry, and change

the water daily; and

- When handling garden soil, compost and potting mixes:
  1. Wear gloves and a face mask;
  2. Water gardens and compost gently using low pressure;
  3. Open composted potting mixes slowly and make sure the opening is directed away from the face;
  4. Wet the soil to reduce dust when potting plants; and
  5. Avoid working in poorly ventilated places such as enclosed greenhouses.

The public may visit the CHP's LD page, the Code of Practice for Prevention of LD and the Housekeeping Guidelines for Cold and Hot Water Systems for Building Management of the Prevention of LD Committee, and the CHP's risk-based strategy for prevention and control of LD.

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## Government's response

In response to media enquiries, a Government spokesman gave the following reply today (February 13):

We understand today that a staff member working in the Central Government Offices (CGO) was admitted to a hospital under the Hospital Authority (HA) and had undergone tests on novel coronavirus under the "Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance" scheme implemented by HA.

The test results have been confirmed to be negative for the above suspected case. This is hence not an infected case.

As the hospitalised staff has been working in CGO, we have in the first instance arranged to step up cleaning and disinfection for the relevant parts of the CGO premises in accordance with the guidelines and advice from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP).

We will continue to follow CHP's guidelines and take appropriate precautionary measures in CGO with a view to minimising the risk of contracting and spreading the novel coronavirus.