

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (August 26) reported the latest number of cases of Legionnaires' disease (LD), and stressed the importance of using and maintaining properly designed man-made water systems, adding that susceptible groups should strictly observe relevant precautions.

From August 18 to 24, three community-acquired LD cases were reported:

1. A male patient, aged 86 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Yee Shun House, Yee Nga Court, 15 On Po Road, Tai Po;
2. A male patient, aged 66 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wing Lung Building, 20-22 Wing Lung Street, Sham Shui Po; and
3. A female patient, aged 79 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Shin Lun House, Fu Shin Estate, 12 On Po Road, Tai Po.

"Epidemiological investigations are ongoing to identify potential sources of infection, high-risk exposure and clusters, if any," a spokesman for the CHP said.

As of August 24 this year, 73 LD cases have been reported. In 2018 and 2017, there were 105 and 72 cases respectively.

"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 (μm) 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 μm 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.

EPD successfully intercepts two cases of import of hazardous electronic waste by air (with photo)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) successfully intercepted two cases of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste from Nigeria at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). The two importers involved, namely Success Zone Electronics Limited and Qianhang International Logistics (HK) Co Limited, were convicted at the Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (August 26) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) and fined a total of \$25,000.

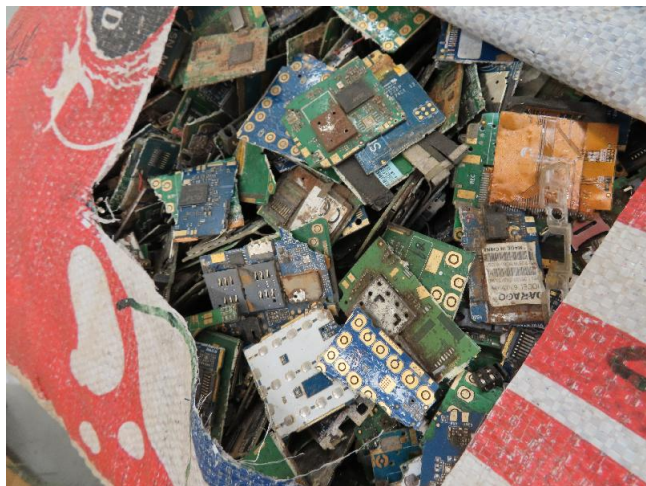
A spokesman for the EPD said that in light of the import and export control of electronic waste under the WDO implemented at the end of last year, the department has been closely exchanging intelligence and collaborating with the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), especially on strengthening interception of hazardous electronic waste entering Hong Kong illegally by air. With the assistance of the C&ED, the EPD intercepted two batches of air cargoes claimed to contain general goods at HKIA in February and March this year. After inspection, they were found to be loaded with hazardous electronic waste, namely waste printed circuit boards, with a total market value of about \$200,000. The EPD immediately returned the intercepted hazardous electronic waste to the place of origin and notified the local enforcement authority concerned about the return shipments. The department also initiated prosecutions against the two importers under the WDO.

The spokesman stressed that waste printed circuit boards are hazardous electronic waste containing various heavy metals and other toxic chemical substances. They are classified as chemical waste and are regulated under the existing laws on chemical waste disposal. The EPD will continue to rigorously combat the illegal import and export of hazardous waste, bring offenders to justice and prevent Hong Kong from becoming a distribution hub for illegally imported and exported waste.

The spokesman reminded importers of the waste recycling trade not to illegally import (including import into or transshipment through Hong Kong) or export hazardous waste. According to the WDO, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without obtaining a valid permit beforehand. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

For more information about the control of chemical waste, please visit the EPD's website:

www.epd.gov.hk/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/guide_ref/guide_cwc.html.



Call for adequate public transport services on first school day

The Transport Department (TD) today (August 26) said that major public transport operators have been reminded to provide adequate public transport services to cater for transport demand on the first school day (September 2).

"The TD's Emergency Transport Co-ordination Centre (ETCC) will closely monitor the traffic situation and public transport services on September 2. The department will also maintain close liaison with major public transport operators and relevant government departments. Staff will be deployed at various major locations throughout the territory to observe the traffic conditions and provide on-site information to the ETCC for arranging public transport service enhancement or informing the Police for traffic regulation when necessary," a department spokesman said.

Students, especially those attending a new school, are reminded to familiarise themselves with the public transport services to schools and allow more travelling time on the first school day. Students living on the outlying islands or attending schools on the outlying islands should check the ferry schedules, the vessel types to be used and journey times of their intended ferry trips beforehand. Students are also reminded to pay attention to road safety when attending school.

More information may be obtained through the following hotlines and websites of major public transport operators:

Operator	Hotline	Website
MTR Corporation Limited	2881 8888	www.mtr.com.hk
New World First Bus	2136 8888	www.nwstbus.com.hk

Citybus	2873 0818	www.nwstbus.com.hk
Kowloon Motor Bus	2745 4466	www.kmb.hk
Long Win Bus	2261 2791	www.lwb.hk
New Lantau Bus	2984 9848	www.newlantaobus.com
New World First Ferry	2131 8181	www.nwff.com.hk
Hong Kong and Kowloon Ferry	2815 6063	www.hkkf.com.hk

Motorists are advised not to drive to the school areas if possible. Drivers of nanny vans and school buses should not carry excess passengers or leave schoolchildren in vehicles unattended. An escort should be provided on board when serving kindergarten or primary school students. Parents should agree well in advance with schools, operators of nanny vans or school buses on the locations of picking up and dropping off their children.

Members of the public are advised to pay attention to the latest transport and traffic news on radio and television before leaving home. For enquiries, please call the department hotline on 2804 2600 or the 1823 Call Centre.

CFS announces risk assessment study results on Sterigmatocystin in food

The Centre for Food Safety (CFS) of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department announced today (August 26) the results of a recently completed risk assessment study on Sterigmatocystin (STC) in food. The CFS collected 331 food samples at the retail level for testing of STC levels with the aim of estimating the exposure of the local adult population to STC through consumption of these food items, and to assess the associated health risks. The study results showed that the health concern for the local population due to dietary exposure to STC from the food items covered in the study is low.

A spokesman for the CFS said, "STC is a mycotoxin that can be formed on food commodities which are contaminated with moulds due to improper storage. The liver and kidneys are the main targets of acute STC toxicity. Animal studies showed that STC may cause cancer to animals upon chronic exposure. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified it as a group 2B agent, which is possibly carcinogenic to humans."

The 331 food samples taken from local markets for testing of STC levels covered 12 food groups, namely flour, breakfast cereal, dried spices, grains, pasta and noodles, bakery and pastry items, coffee beans, starch substitute,

peanuts and tree nuts, cheese, beer and cured meat. The study results showed that only about 10 per cent of the samples (i.e. 32 samples) were found to contain STC, from food groups of flour, breakfast cereal, dried spices, grains, pasta and noodles, bakery and pastry items and coffee beans. Among the 32 samples, 29 samples contained STC at a level of less than 1 microgram/kilogram; while STC was not detectable in all samples of the food groups of starch substitutes, peanuts and tree nuts, cheese, beer and cured meat.

For dietary exposure, according to the level of STC detected in the collected food groups, the estimates of average and high consumers were 0.00017mcg/kg body weight (bw) per day and 0.00033mcg/kg bw per day, with the Margin of Exposure (MOE) values at 940 000 and 480 000 respectively. The European Food Safety Authority considered that an MOE value of 10 000 or higher is of low public health concern. The study results showed that the MOE values for the local adult population were far above 10 000, the health concern due to their STC exposure is therefore considered low. Pasta and noodles was the major contributor to dietary exposure of STC.

The spokesman advised the public to manage the storage conditions of food properly, such as putting food in cool and dry places to prevent fungal infestation in food and reduce the risk of STC contamination.

The Codex Alimentarius Commission has not established any standard for STC in food. The CFS will continue to keep in view the relevant scientific research, risk assessments, regulatory controls and latest developments about STC in other countries. The study report is available on the CFS website at www.cfs.gov.hk.

Lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach and Golden Beach resume

Attention TV/radio announcers:

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

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department has announced that the lifesaving services at Cafeteria New Beach and Golden Beach in Tuen Mun District resumed today (August 26). The lifesaving services at the beaches were suspended earlier due to an insufficient number of lifeguards on duty.