

Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident that happened today

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about the work accident that happened at a construction site in Tai Po today (July 18), in which an excavator toppled during operation and pressed against the male operator. The excavator operator was seriously injured and was certified dead later in the hospital. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and has expressed its deepest sympathy to the victim's family.

A LD's spokesman said, "We commenced immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the contractors suspending the use of excavators on the site. The contractors cannot resume the work process until LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risk have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take actions pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, safe plant and safe systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In regard to today's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, and reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of

other workers.

Immigration Department clarifies rumours on Internet

The Immigration Department (ImmD) is aware that there have been rumours on online discussion forums relating to alleged inadequacy of an arrangement on identity cards by ImmD recently. ImmD would like to reiterate that the arrangement aims to provide convenience for residents who have just been granted the right of abode. To avoid hassles for these residents in visiting ImmD offices again to apply for a permanent identity card after acquiring their right of abode through scheduled appointments, ImmD implemented this arrangement to allow them to apply for a permanent identity card at the Registration of Persons Offices immediately after acquiring the right of abode. ImmD would like to reiterate that such an arrangement would not affect the provision of normal identity card service to other residents. Furthermore, ImmD would like to clarify that it is absolutely untrue that a daily quota of 150 is reserved for One-way Permit holders and a daily quota of 150 is reserved for talents and professionals as mentioned in the forums, as there is no such arrangement.

Alert response level of Ebola preparedness and response plan activated

The Government today (July 18) announced the activation of the Alert Response Level in accordance with the Preparedness and Response Plan for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) following the World Health Organization (WHO)'s declaration of the EVD outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

The WHO yesterday (July 17) declared the EVD outbreak in the DRC as a PHEIC. Since the start of the EVD outbreak in the DRC in August last year, there have been 2 522 confirmed or probable cases including 1 698 deaths (as of July 16). At least 136 cases affected health workers including 40 deaths. The intensity of the epidemiological situation is fluctuating, with about 80 new cases reported weekly. A confirmed case of EVD was reported in Goma of the DRC on July 14. Goma is a city of 2 million inhabitants close to the

Rwandan border. According to the WHO, the risk remains very high at national and regional levels but still low at the global level.

"In view of the PHEIC declared and current epidemiological situation, the Alert Response Level, the lowest level under its three-tier EVD Plan, is activated by the Government. We will issue letters to doctors and hospitals to inform them of the latest situation, and will also closely monitor overseas developments and the WHO's recommendations," a spokesman for the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) said.

The EVD Plan sets out the Government's preparedness and response plan in case of an outbreak of EVD. A three-tier response level is adopted in the plan. Three response levels, namely Alert, Serious and Emergency, are based on the risk assessment of the EVD that may affect Hong Kong and its health impact on the community.

"Viral haemorrhagic fever (including EVD) has been a notifiable infectious disease in Hong Kong since July 2008. Suspected or confirmed cases of EVD must be promptly reported to the CHP for investigation, control and surveillance. Locally, there has been no confirmed EVD case to date," the spokesman said.

Prevention and control measures against EVD have been put in place locally, including:

- Temperature screening for inbound travellers has been in place at all boundary control points. Suspected cases of EVD will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for the Ebola virus;
- Strengthened surveillance of patients with EVD symptoms who have a travel history to the DRC within 21 days before onset; and
- Publicity and health education on EVD will be strengthened at all boundary control points.

There is currently no registered vaccine for EVD in Hong Kong. The public should avoid unnecessary travel to affected areas, and observe good personal and environmental hygiene during travel:

- Always use liquid soap or alcohol-based hand rub to clean hands before touching the eyes, nose and mouth;
- Avoid close contact with feverish or sick patients, and contact with blood or body fluids of patients, including items which may have come into contact with patients' blood or body fluids;
- Avoid contact with animals; and
- Cook food thoroughly before consumption.

The EVD Plan and more information on the disease are available on the CHP's EVD page (www.chp.gov.hk/en/view_content/34199.html). The public can

also visit the page of CHP's Travel Health Service (www.travelhealth.gov.hk/english/outbreaknews/outbreaknews.html) for relevant travel health advice.

Update on Candida auris case in North Lantau Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement made by Kowloon West Cluster on Candida auris carrier cases, the spokesperson for North Lantau Hospital (NLTH) gave the following update today (July 18):

According to the contact tracing result, one more male patient (aged 85) was confirmed as carrying Candida auris while not having signs of infection. The patient had stayed in the Extended Care Ward of NLTH and has been discharged. In accordance with prevailing guidelines, the following enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted in the hospital:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced patient and environmental screening procedures; and
3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene of staff and patients.

NLTH will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patient. The case has been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

Eligible households affected by Kwu Tung North and Fanling North New Development Areas Project start receiving rehousing flat offers

The Development Bureau (DEVB) announced today (July 18) that the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) will be issuing flat offer letters to eligible households affected by the First Phase development of the Kwu Tung North

(KTN) and Fanling North (FLN) New Development Areas (NDAs).

In the past few months, the Lands Department (LandsD), the Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) and the HA have been working at full steam to handle rehousing and compensation matters for affected households in the KTN and FLN NDAs. At present, more than 170 households affected by the First Phase development have been confirmed as being eligible for rehousing and will be allocated units in Po Shek Wu Estate in the same district (North District) by the HA. The HA will soon contact these households by post to inform them of their allocated units and follow up on the intake formalities. Separately, around 10 other eligible households which applied for rental units in existing estates under the HKHS have been allocated units in HKHS estates.

"In May last year, the DEVB introduced a non-means tested rehousing option for the Government's development clearance exercises to address the needs of households which could not fulfil the means test requirement. Among the households allocated flats as mentioned above, over 70 per cent are rehoused under this new rehousing arrangement," a spokesman for the DEVB said.

The LandsD and the relevant parties will continue to handle as quickly as possible the rehousing and compensation matters of other households affected by the First Phase development. As for households which are affected by the Remaining Phase development and have submitted applications for voluntary early departure from and surrendering of their squatter structures, their applications for rehousing and compensation are also being processed. The LandsD and the relevant parties will keep close contact with these households, and inform them of the application results as soon as practicable.

At the end of this month, the LandsD will issue letters to notify all households affected by the First Phase development of their departure deadlines (depending on the works programme, the departure deadlines for the households affected by the First Phase development range from the first half of 2020 to the second half of 2022) and the status of their applications for rehousing and compensation. Three months before the departure deadline for each household, the LandsD will also affix notices in the relevant areas in accordance with statutory procedures.

"Whilst the departure deadlines for the households affected by the First Phase development range from the first half of 2020 to the second half of 2022, eligible households are now gradually receiving rehousing flat offers. Such an arrangement demonstrates the Government's commitment to its objective of 'rehousing before clearance'. The Government will continue to work towards properly rehousing the eligible households before clearance exercises commence," the DEVB spokesman said.

As far as the private land owners are concerned, the LandsD plans to commence in the coming few months the statutory land resumption process for all the private land affected by the First Phase development. Resumption notices will be affixed in the development area, stipulating that the land

will revert to the Government after three months. The expiration date on the resumption notice is the date on which the lots concerned will revert to the Government, but it is not and does not affect the departure deadlines for the affected households, of which the households will be notified separately. After affixing the resumption notices, the LandsD will start arranging the disbursement of ex-gratia compensation to the affected private land owners.

About 490 households affected by the First Phase development of the KTN and FLN NDAs are in contact with the LandsD for eligibility screening. As stated above, over 180 households have been confirmed as being eligible for rehousing and allocated rehousing units. Around 80 applications for rehousing and 40 applications for cash compensation are being processed, while nearly 50 others await submission of further information. The remaining around 140 households are ineligible for rehousing or compensation based on currently available information, with major reasons including that they own domestic properties or are existing public rental housing tenants, they only moved into the areas of the NDAs after the freezing survey, or the structures concerned are unauthorised structures (i.e. no squatter survey or land instrument records). As explained by the Government in the past, in addressing the needs of the clearerees, the Government also needs to ensure the proper and fair use of public resources. If households covered by the freezing survey are not eligible for rehousing and compensation, they will be granted the Domestic Removal Allowance.

If affected households have any enquiries, they may contact the Clearance (2) Office of the LandsD at 2664 5141. If necessary, households may also seek assistance from the Social Service Teams engaged by the Government (Tel: 6601 1673 for KTN or 2503 0818 for FLN).

The KTN and FLN NDAs form a core part of the Government's land supply strategy. Upon full development, the NDAs will provide a total of about 71 800 housing units. The Finance Committee of the Legislative Council has approved in May this year the funding for commencing the First Phase development, which will provide about 21 000 housing units, of which 18 000 are public housing units. Population intake of the first batches of private and public housing is expected to start in 2023-24 and 2026-27 respectively.