

Customs launches new crime-reporting hotline tomorrow

Hong Kong Customs will launch a new crime-reporting hotline (182 80 80) tomorrow (October 1) to facilitate crime reporting by the public.

Through this hotline, members of the public may report crimes enforced by Customs, including smuggling; manufacturing, trafficking or possession of dangerous drugs, infringing goods, duty-not-paid cigarettes, liquor or fuel; money laundering; goods or services with false trade descriptions; unfair trade practices; unsafe consumer goods, toys and children's products; shortweight; operating a currency exchange or remittance service without a licence; and transactions involving precious metals and stones with a total value at or above HK\$120,000 conducted without the required registration.

The new crime-reporting hotline number (182 80 80) is easier to remember, and the current hotline will remain in place until further notice. In addition, Customs has also produced a series of promotional videos on unfair trade practices to be released on various social media platforms during the peak period of visitors of the Mainland's National Day Golden Week to remind tourists to stay alert when shopping and avoid falling into consumer pitfalls of unfair trade practices. If they encounter such situations, they can immediately call the crime-reporting hotline.

Apart from calling the abovementioned 24-hour hotline, members of the public may continue to report crimes through other channels, including e-mail (crimereport@customs.gov.hk), online crime-reporting form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002), crime-reporting mail, fax or post. For details, please refer to the Customs' website (www.customs.gov.hk). All information provided will be kept strictly confidential.

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (September 30) 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 September 22 to 28, the CHP recorded three community-acquired LD cases and one imported LD case:

1. A female patient, aged 60 with underlying illnesses, who had been to the Mainland during the incubation period and was classified as an imported case;
2. A male patient, aged 66 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Eastern District;
3. A male patient, aged 66 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Sha Tin District; and
4. A male patient, aged 67 with underlying illnesses, who lives in Wan Chai District.

"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 September 28, 87 LD cases had been recorded this year. In 2023 and 2022, there were 121 and 80 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; 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 that 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; 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.

â€‹â€‹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.

HAD opens temporary heat shelters

The Home Affairs Department is opening 19 community halls/community centres as temporary heat shelters today (September 30).

The temporary heat shelters will remain open for people to take refuge from the heat when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force. From 10.30pm to 8am the next day, the temporary heat shelters will also provide bedding and a sleeping place for people in need. The shelters are manned by duty attendants.

For further information, please call the department's hotline before midnight on 2572 8427.

The heat shelters are located at:

Hong Kong Island:

Central and Western –
Sai Ying Pun Community Complex Community Hall
3/F, Sai Ying Pun Community Complex
2 High Street, Sai Ying Pun

Eastern –
Causeway Bay Community Centre
3/F, 7 Fook Yum Road, Causeway Bay

Southern –
Lei Tung Community Hall
Lei Tung Estate, Ap Lei Chau

Wan Chai –
Wan Chai Activities Centre
LG/F, Wan Chai Market, 258 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

Kowloon Districts:

Kowloon City –
Hung Hom Community Hall
1/F, Kowloon City Government Offices
42 Bailey Street, Hung Hom

Kwun Tong –
Lam Tin (West) Estate Community Centre
71 Kai Tin Road, Lam Tin

Sham Shui Po –
Shek Kip Mei Community Hall
G/F, Block 42, Shek Kip Mei Estate, Sham Shui Po

Wong Tai Sin –
Tsz Wan Shan (South) Estate Community Centre
45 Wan Wah Street, Tsz Wan Shan

Yau Tsim Mong –
Henry G Leong Yaumatei Community Centre
60 Public Square Street, Yau Ma Tei

New Territories Districts:

Islands –

Tung Chung Community Hall

G/F, Tung Chung Municipal Services Building, 39 Man Tung Road, Tung Chung

Kwai Tsing –

Kwai Shing Community Hall

Podium, Block 6, Kwai Shing West Estate, Kwai Chung

North –

Cheung Wah Community Hall

Cheung Wah Estate, Fanling

Sai Kung –

Hang Hau Community Hall

G/F, Sai Kung Tseung Kwan O Government Complex, 38 Pui Shing Road, Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O

Sha Tin –

Lung Hang Estate Community Centre

Lung Hang Estate, Sha Tin

Tai Po –

Tai Po Community Centre

2 Heung Sze Wui Street, Tai Po

Tsuen Wan –

Lei Muk Shue Community Hall

G/F, Hong Shue House, Lei Muk Shue Estate, Tsuen Wan

Tuen Mun –

Butterfly Bay Community Centre

Butterfly Estate (near Tip Sum House), Tuen Mun

Yuen Long –

Long Ping Community Hall

Long Ping Estate, Yuen Long

Yuen Long –

Tin Yiu Community Centre

Tin Yiu Estate, Tin Shui Wai

In addition to the above heat shelters, a number of community halls/community centres can also be used for taking refuge from the heat during their operating hours. For their address details, please browse the following

document: www.had.gov.hk/file_manager/en/documents/public_services/emergency_services/List_CH_CC_Day_E.pdf.

Licence of employment agency revoked

The Labour Department (LD) today (September 30) reminded operators of employment agencies (EAs) to conduct their business in compliance with the law and the requirements of the Code of Practice for EAs (the Code) at all times.

The LD has revoked the EA licence of JB Employment Agency (JB) located in Kwun Tong. The licence of JB was revoked due to its failure to meet the requirements set out in the Code in various aspects, including failing to draw up service agreements with employers during provision of services; failing to provide employers with receipts for service fees charged; failing to brief employers on the laws relevant to employment of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs) and their rights and obligations; failing to provide employers with guidebooks, leaflets, information pamphlets and sample forms on the rights and benefits of FDHs; and failing to ask employers to confirm in writing that they have received the signed originals of standard employment contracts.

Under section 53(1)(c)(iva) of the Employment Ordinance (Cap. 57) (E0), the Commissioner for Labour (the Commissioner) may revoke the licence of an EA if she is satisfied that the licensee concerned has not complied with the Code.

"The Code sets out the salient legal requirements that EA operators must observe in operating their business, as well as the standards which the Commissioner expects from EAs. The E0 stipulates that the Commissioner may refuse to issue or renew a licence, or may revoke a licence, if she is satisfied on reasonable grounds that the licensee or the person intending to be the licensee of an EA, or a related person of or an individual employed by the licensee or the person intending to be the licensee, has contravened any provision of Part XII or any regulation made under section 62 of the E0, such as overcharging job seekers or operating an EA without a licence, or has not complied with the Code issued under section 62A(1) of the E0," a spokesman for the LD said.

This is the first case of revocation of an EA licence in 2024.

Should there be enquiries about matters related to EAs or complaints about suspected violations of EAs, please contact the Employment Agencies Administration of the LD (telephone: 2115 3667; email: ea-ee@labour.gov.hk; address: Unit 906, 9/F, One Mong Kok Road Commercial Centre, 1 Mong Kok Road, Kowloon).

Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (September 30) that the total assets of the Exchange Fund amounted to HK\$3,981.5 billion as at August 31, 2024, HK\$10.6 billion higher than that at the end of July 2024. Foreign currency assets increased by HK\$10.3 billion and Hong Kong dollar assets increased by HK\$0.3 billion.

The rise in foreign currency assets was mainly due to mark-to-market revaluation of investments, interest income from investments and an increase in the month-end balances of unsettled purchase of securities, which were partly offset by withdrawals of Fiscal Reserves placements. The rise in Hong Kong dollar assets was mainly due to mark-to-market revaluation of Hong Kong equities, which was partly offset by a decrease in placements with banks.

The Currency Board Account shows that the Monetary Base at the end of August 2024 was HK\$1,934.9 billion, increased by HK\$11.7 billion, or 0.6 per cent, from the end of July 2024. The increase was mainly due to the increase in the outstanding amount of Certificates of Indebtedness and amortisation of discount on Exchange Fund Bills and Notes issued.

The amount of Backing Assets increased by HK\$17.6 billion, or 0.8 per cent, to HK\$2,173.1 billion at the end of August 2024. The increase was mainly attributable to interest from investments, the issuance of Certificates of Indebtedness and mark-to-market revaluation of investments. The Backing Ratio increased from 112.07 per cent at the end of July 2024 to 112.31 per cent at the end of August 2024.

At present, four press releases relating to the Exchange Fund's data are issued by the HKMA each month. Three of these releases are issued to disseminate monetary data in accordance with the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The fourth press release, on the Exchange Fund's Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account, is made in accordance with the HKMA's policy of maintaining a high level of transparency. For the month of September 2024, the scheduled dates for issuing the press releases are as follows:

September 6 (Issued)	SDDS International Reserves (Hong Kong's Latest Foreign Currency Reserve Assets Figures)
September 13 (Issued)	SDDS Analytical Accounts of the Central Bank (Analytical Accounts of the Exchange Fund)

September 30	SDDS Template on International Reserves and Foreign Currency Liquidity
September 30	Exchange Fund Abridged Balance Sheet and Currency Board Account