

Statement by S for Health on surgical light safety issue

Regarding the incident in which a surgical light in United Christian Hospital fell off and injured a staff member last Saturday (February 18), the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, issued the following statement today (February 20):

"Safety of patients and staff is of our prime concern. This is an extremely serious incident involving high-standard medical equipment for use in operation rooms and it is absolutely unacceptable. I convened a meeting with the management of the Hospital Authority (HA) this morning to discuss the incident. Regarding the fact that a total of 12 surgical lights of the same model were found to have similar problems so far, I have instructed the HA to investigate and look into this incident with the vendor in a serious manner by reviewing aspects such as the design, material and maintenance of the relevant equipment. They are also tasked to take prompt follow-up actions properly, including immediate inspection of all hoist installations in its facilities based on risk assessment to guard the safety of staff and patients. I would like to express my sympathy to the injured staff member and appeal for the understanding of patients affected by the incident. The HA will make the utmost effort in minimising the impact on the patients.

In the light of this incident, I have also requested the HA to conduct a comprehensive review on its response mechanism adopted by the hospital management in handling similar incidents, covering also the workflow of overall crisis management and information dissemination, and submit to me a review report and recommendations for improvement as soon as possible."

CHP appeals to public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 20) appealed to members of the public to take precautionary measures against carbon monoxide poisoning.

The CHP received a notification from United Christian Hospital (UCH) yesterday (February 19) on a cluster of carbon monoxide poisoning. The cluster involved a 23-year-old man and a 21-year-old woman, who complained of loss of consciousness after visiting a premises with people smoking waterpipe

yesterday. They were sent to UCH and were later transferred to Pamela Youde Nethersole Eastern Hospital for treatment. They are in stable condition and have been discharged.

A preliminary investigation revealed that charcoal fuel was claimed to be used for smoking waterpipe in the premises when the door and windows were shut with air-conditioning switched on.

A spokesman for the CHP reminded that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless and tasteless gas which is a by-product from incomplete combustion of any fuel which contains carbon, such as charcoals and embers. Members of the public are urged to use fuel-burning appliances properly and in a well-ventilated area.

Exposure to a low concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to a range of symptoms such as dizziness, headache, tiredness and nausea; whereas exposure to a high concentration of carbon monoxide can lead to impaired vision, disturbed co-ordination, unconsciousness, brain damage or even death. People should seek medical attention immediately if suspected of developing symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Also, waterpipe is a smoking product and its combustion of fuel (e.g. charcoal) releases high concentrations of carbon monoxide. Due to deeper inhalation and longer smoking session, waterpipe users usually inhale more toxins than they would when smoking cigarettes. A typical one-hour waterpipe smoking session exposes the user to 100-200 times the volume of smoke inhaled from a single conventional cigarette. Besides, sharing the waterpipe apparatus increases the risk of infectious disease transmission such as tuberculosis. The DH urges people not to smoke waterpipe. Furthermore, smoking is the major preventable cause of death. Members of the public is urged to quit smoking now for health's sake. For more information, they can call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline at 1833 183, or visit the thematic webpage (www.livetobaccofree.hk/en).

CHP investigates outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection at two kindergartens

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health is today (February 20) investigating outbreaks of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) at two kindergartens in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung, and appeals to members of the public and staff of institutions to stay alert and maintain strict personal and environmental hygiene.

The outbreak in the kindergarten in Tsuen Wan involves 21 students,

comprising five males and 16 females aged 3 to 5. They developed symptoms since February 10. Twelve of them sought medical attention, and hospitalisation was required for one child who tested positive for respiratory syncytial virus. All of them are in stable condition. Their COVID-19 rapid antigen test results were negative.

The outbreak in the kindergarten in Kwai Chung involves 23 students, comprising 12 males and 11 females aged 3 to 5; and a staff member. They developed symptoms since February 9. Thirteen of them sought medical attention, all are in stable condition and none required hospitalisation. Their COVID-19 rapid antigen test results were negative.

The CHP has provided preventive advice against URTI to the schools, such as advising the schools to arrange cleaning and disinfection, to open windows where appropriate for better ventilation and to separate affected students from other students, etc. The schools have been placed under medical surveillance.

The public should maintain good personal and environmental hygiene against influenza and other respiratory illnesses and note the following:

- Receive seasonal influenza vaccination for personal protection;
- Surgical masks can prevent transmission of respiratory viruses from ill persons. It is essential for persons who are symptomatic (even if having mild symptoms) to wear a surgical mask;
- Wear a surgical mask when taking public transport or staying in crowded places. It is important to wear a mask properly, including performing hand hygiene before wearing and after removing a mask;
- Avoid touching one's eyes, mouth and nose;
- Wash hands with liquid soap and water properly whenever possibly contaminated;
- When hands are not visibly soiled, clean them with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub;
- Cover the nose and mouth with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissue paper properly into a lidded rubbish bin, and wash hands thoroughly afterwards;
- Maintain good indoor ventilation;
- When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending classes at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly; and
- Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, take adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid overstress.

Members of the public, particularly children, the elderly and those with chronic diseases, should consult a doctor promptly if they develop symptoms of respiratory tract infection.

HKAEE and HKGOC honour businesses for achieving environmental excellence (with photos)

The following is issued on behalf of the Environmental Campaign Committee:

The 2021 Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence (HKAEE) and Hong Kong Green Organisation Certification (HKGOC) Presentation Ceremony was held today (February 20) in a hybrid format at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre and online, to commend winners for their green management practices and their contributions to environmental protection. Winners of the 2021 Hong Kong Green Innovations Awards (HKGIA) and corporations certified as Hong Kong Green Organisations (HKGOs) in 2021 were also commended at the presentation ceremony.

The number of entries competing for the HKAEE reached a record high of 3 115, more than an eightfold increase compared with the figure for 2008, when the awards were launched. A total of 55 organisations won gold, silver or bronze awards this year, and 164 received certificates of merit. There were 81 entries in the 2021 HKGIA, a figure around five times higher than that of 2011 when the HKGIA was established. To commend company management and employees for their dedication in enhancing the environmental performance of their respective companies and the community, four awardees were selected under the Outstanding Green Achiever Commendation Scheme. In addition, 23 organisations were honoured as Outstanding HKAEE Promotional Partners.

The officiating guests of the ceremony included the Secretary for Environment and Ecology, Mr Tse Chin-wan; the Chairman of the Environmental Campaign Committee (ECC), Professor Simon Wong; the Vice-chairman of the ECC, Ms Jenny Li; the Convenor of the Education Working Group under the ECC, Mr Wong Chi-keung; the Permanent Secretary for Environment and Ecology (Environment), Miss Janice Tse; and the Acting Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Samuel Chui.

Mr Tse congratulated the winning companies and organisations at the presentation ceremony. He praised them for their dedication in promoting environmental protection despite the challenges under the pandemic and economic downturn. He also expressed his gratitude for their participation in pursuing corporate social responsibilities as well as implementing various effective measures and innovative solutions for environmental protection while operating their businesses and setting good examples in their industries. He said that the Government had launched a number of schemes to combat climate change and the involvement by all sectors of society is indispensable.

The HKAEE commends organisations that have demonstrated outstanding environmental performance in 15 different sectors. The three judging criteria

are green leadership, programme and performance, and partner synergy. The final adjudicating panels comprise the Chairman and members of the ECC, as well as representatives from major chambers of different sectors in Hong Kong.

The HKGIA aims to encourage local organisations to tackle environmental challenges using new ideas that will benefit the environment. The three assessment criteria are levels of innovation, environmental achievements, and practicability and contribution to society.

The HKGOC aims to benchmark green performances of organisations and encourages them to sustain their environmental initiatives in four major aspects, namely waste reduction, energy saving, carbon reduction and indoor air quality improvement by issuing them relevant certificates. Participating organisations can obtain the title of HKGO if they can demonstrate and attain certain environmental achievements such as winning HKAEE awards, signing any of the environment-related charters launched or are supported by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, or possess a valid ISO 14001 certificate. To date, over 3 000 organisations from different industries have obtained the title of HKGO, among which 1 167 organisations gained the title in 2021.

The HKAEE and the HKGOC are jointly organised by the ECC, the Environment and Ecology Bureau, the Advisory Council on the Environment, the Business Environment Council, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the Hong Kong Chinese Importers' and Exporters' Association, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong Productivity Council. The HKAEE and the HKGOC are sponsored by the Environment and Conservation Fund.



CS to visit Guangzhou

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Chan Kwok-ki, will depart for Guangzhou in the evening tomorrow (February 19) for attending a conference on high-quality development of talent services in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, jointly organised by the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, on February 20.

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Chris Sun, will accompany Mr Chan to Guangzhou.

Both officials will return to Hong Kong on February 20.

During Mr Chan's absence, the Deputy Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Cheuk Wing-hing, will be the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration. During Mr Sun's absence, the Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Mr Ho Kai-ming, will be the Acting Secretary for Labour and Welfare.