

Security Guard employed by Housing Department contractor at Ching Long Shopping Centre tests positive for COVID-19

The Housing Department last night (December 29) learned that a security guard employed by one of its contractors has tested positive for COVID-19. He is now in hospital for treatment.

The security guard normally works on the middle shift of the roster and is responsible for the patrolling, manning the security control room and management office of Ching Long Shopping Centre. He last performed duties on December 28, and was notified by the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) on December 29 that he had tested positive for COVID-19.

The security guard has no recent travel history. He has been wearing a face mask and observing relevant disease prevention measures at work. When performing duties, he has been undergoing temperature checks and his body temperature was normal.

The security guard is not a resident of nearby Kai Ching Estate or Tak Long Estate.

The common areas, the security control room and management office of Ching Long Shopping Centre have been thoroughly cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the guidelines of the CHP.

The Housing Department will continue to keep up close liaison with the CHP and co-operate with its quarantine work.

Government to gazette compulsory testing notices

The Government will exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) and publish in the Gazette compulsory testing notices, which require any person who had been present on 43 specified premises during the specified

period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau (FHB) said today (December 30), "The global and local epidemic situations continue to be serious. The number of local confirmed cases has remained at a relatively high level, and cases with unknown infection sources accounted for around 35 per cent of the total number of confirmed cases in the past two weeks. The decline in the number of confirmed cases was much slower than that in the third wave of the pandemic, and the trend of progressive decline was not significant. To cut the transmission chain in the community as soon as possible, the Government has decided to expand the scope for 'compulsory testing on mandatory basis'. If confirmed cases not epidemiologically linked to each other were found in two or more units in the same building in the past 14 days, the building would be included in the compulsory testing notice under Cap. 599J. Persons who had been present at the relevant building in the past 14 days will have to undergo compulsory testing. A total of 42 buildings fulfilling the above criteria would be covered by the compulsory testing notice.

"Furthermore, the Government had earlier sponsored a multi-disciplinary team of the University of Hong Kong to conduct a preliminary study on the monitoring of the COVID-19 virus level in sewage. The study revealed that the sewage samples in Kai Fai House of Choi Wan (II) Estate constantly tested positive, which implied that persons infected with COVID-19 might be present at the relevant place, similar to the situation earlier in Fung Chak House nearby in the same estate, while Ming Lai House next to Kai Fai House had just been subject to compulsory testing. For prevention purposes and after taking into account expert views, the Government will publish a compulsory testing notice under Cap. 599J, which requires persons who had been to Kai Fai House during the specified period to undergo testing."

Details of persons subject to compulsory testing are as follows:

Any person who had been present on any specified premises listed in the Annex, for more than two hours at any time during the period from December 17 to December 30, 2020 (including but not limited to visitors, residents and workers), have to undergo testing by January 4, 2021. If persons subject to compulsory testing have previously undergone testing between December 28 and December 30, 2020, they would be taken to have complied with the requirements set out in the compulsory testing notices.

"Based on recent experience, persons subject to compulsory testing would feel more relieved if they receive SMS (mobile phone text message) notifications confirming the negative results of the tests. Such SMS notifications can also facilitate law enforcement. Therefore, the Government has updated the testing routes applicable to compulsory testing notices, which only include those where SMS notifications confirming negative test results would be issued to persons who underwent testing afterwards. The Government will set up mobile specimen collection stations near the relevant buildings shortly, and the community testing centres near the relevant buildings will provide free testing to persons subject to compulsory

testing."

Persons subject to compulsory testing may choose to undergo testing via the following routes:

1. To visit any of the mobile specimen collection stations (see the list and target groups (if applicable) at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html) for testing;
2. To attend any of the community testing centres (see the list at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/);
3. To obtain a deep throat saliva specimen collection pack from any of the 121 post offices, vending machines set up at 20 MTR stations or 47 designated general outpatient clinics (GOPCs) of the Hospital Authority and return the specimen to one of the designated specimen collection points (see the distribution points and times, and the specimen collection points and times, at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html);
4. To undergo testing at any of the GOPCs of the Hospital Authority as instructed by a medical professional of the Hospital Authority;
5. To self-arrange testing provided by private laboratories which are recognised by the Department of Health and can issue SMS notifications in respect of test results (see the list at www.coronavirus.gov.hk/pdf/List_of_recognised_laboratories_RTPCR.pdf); or
6. To use a specimen bottle distributed to the relevant specified premises by the Centre for Health Protection (if applicable), and return the specimen bottle with the sample collected as per the relevant guidelines.

The spokesman cautioned that testing received at accident and emergency departments of the Hospital Authority or during hospital stays, or testing provided by private laboratories which cannot issue SMS notifications in respect of test results, does not comply with the requirements of the aforementioned compulsory testing notices.

"If persons subject to compulsory testing have symptoms, they should seek medical attention immediately and undergo testing as instructed by a medical professional. They should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or the community testing centres."

Persons subject to compulsory testing must keep the SMS notification containing the result of the test for checking by a law enforcement officer when the officer requires the persons to provide information about their undergoing the specified test.

Furthermore, persons subject to testing under the compulsory testing notices should, as far as reasonably practicable, take appropriate personal disease prevention measures including wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene, and, unless for the purpose of undergoing the specified test, stay

at their place of residence and avoid going out until the test result is ascertained as far as possible.

Any enquiries on compulsory testing arrangements may be addressed to the hotline at 6275 6901, which operates daily from 9am to 6pm. If persons subject to compulsory testing plan to conduct testing at any of the community testing centres, they can check the centre's appointment status in advance. The hotlines of the community testing centres are at www.communitytest.gov.hk/en/info/.

The Government will continue to trace possibly infected persons who had been to the relevant premises, and seriously verify whether they had complied with the testing notice. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notice commits an offence and may be fined a fixed penalty of \$5,000. The person would also be issued with a compulsory testing order requiring him or her to undergo testing within a specified time frame. Failure to comply with the order is an offence and the offender would be liable to a fine at level 4 (\$25,000) and imprisonment for six months.

The spokesman said, "The Government urges all individuals who are in doubt about their own health conditions, or individuals with infection risks (such as individuals who visited places with epidemic outbreaks or contacted confirmed cases), to undergo testing promptly for early identification of infected persons. The FHB will publish compulsory testing notices regarding particular groups when necessary taking into account the epidemic developments and the testing participation rate."

CHP investigates 54 additional confirmed cases of COVID-19

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) announced that as of 0.00am, December 30, the CHP was investigating 54 additional confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), taking the number of cases to 8 779 in Hong Kong so far (comprising 8 778 confirmed cases and one probable case).

Among the newly reported cases announced, seven are imported cases.

A total of 1 003 cases have been recorded in the past 14 days (December 16 to 29), including 931 local cases of which 349 are from unknown sources.

The CHP's epidemiological investigations and relevant contact tracing on the confirmed cases are ongoing. For case details and contact tracing information, please see Annex or the list of buildings with confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the past 14 days and the latest local situation of COVID-19

available on the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk).

Meanwhile, the CHP reminded those who had visited the specified venues under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J) to receive a COVID-19 nucleic acid test according to the compulsory testing notice. The public are also urged to seek medical attention early if symptoms develop.

Regarding the severe epidemic situation, the CHP called on members of the public to avoid going out, having social contact and dining out. They should put on a surgical mask and maintain stringent hand hygiene when they need to go out. The CHP strongly urged the elderly to stay home as far as possible and avoid going out. They should consider asking their family and friends to help with everyday tasks such as shopping for basic necessities.

The spokesman said, "Given that the situation of COVID-19 infection remains severe and that there is a continuous increase in the number of cases reported around the world, members of the public are strongly urged to avoid all non-essential travel outside Hong Kong.

"The CHP also strongly urges the public to maintain at all times strict personal and environmental hygiene, which is key to personal protection against infection and prevention of the spread of the disease in the community. On a personal level, members of the public should wear a surgical mask when having respiratory symptoms, taking public transport or staying in crowded places. They should also perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes.

"As for household environmental hygiene, members of the public are advised to maintain drainage pipes properly, regularly pour water into drain outlets (U-traps) and cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use. After using the toilet, they should put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs."

Moreover, the Government has launched the website "COVID-19 Thematic Website" (www.coronavirus.gov.hk) for announcing the latest updates on various news on COVID-19 infection and health advice to help the public understand the latest updates. Members of the public may also gain access to information via the COVID-19 WhatsApp Helpline launched by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer. Simply by saving 9617 1823 in their phone contacts or clicking the link wa.me/85296171823?text=hi, they will be able to obtain information on COVID-19 as well as the "StayHomeSafe" mobile app and wristband via WhatsApp.

To prevent pneumonia and respiratory tract infections, members of the public should always maintain good personal and environmental hygiene. They are advised to:

- 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;

- Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching the mouth, nose or eyes, after touching public installations such as handrails or doorknobs, or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing;
 - Maintain drainage pipes properly and regularly (about once a week) pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet (U-trap) to ensure environmental hygiene;
 - Cover all floor drain outlets when they are not in use;
 - After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs;
 - Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds. Then rinse with water and dry with a disposable paper towel. If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, performing hand hygiene with 70 to 80 per cent alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative;
 - Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose of soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly; and
 - When having respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask, refrain from work or attending class at school, avoid going to crowded places and seek medical advice promptly.
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Update on Candida auris cases at Princess Margaret Hospital

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

Regarding an earlier announcement on Candida auris carrier cases, the spokesman for Princess Margaret Hospital made the following update today (December 30):

Having conducted contact tracing, two more female patients (aged 55 and 81) in a medicine and geriatrics ward of the hospital were confirmed as Candida auris carriers while not having signs of infection. The patients are now being treated under isolation and are in stable condition.

The hospital will continue contact tracing of close contacts of the patients in accordance with the prevailing guidelines. A series of enhanced infection control measures have already been adopted to prevent the spread of Candida auris:

1. Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the wards concerned;
2. Enhanced admission screening for patients and environmental screening procedures;

3. Application of stringent contact precautions and enhanced hand hygiene for staff and patients;
4. Application of PCR rapid testing for early identification of carriers; and
5. Application of designated equipment for patient use to avoid cross infection.

The hospital will continue to closely monitor the situation of the patients. The cases have been reported to the Hospital Authority Head Office and the Centre for Health Protection for necessary follow-up.

LCSD suspends recreation and sports programmes and provides ex-gratia payment to personnel affected by cancellation of programmes under Anti-epidemic Fund

A spokesman for the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) said today (December 30) that in view of the severe COVID-19 pandemic situation in Hong Kong, the LCSD will continue to suspend the recreation and sports programmes to be held in January 2021 with the exception of "Online Interactive Sports Training Programmes", so as to reduce social contacts and prevent the spread of the virus in the community. The LCSD will arrange refunds for the affected participants of paid activities.

In addition, to align with the Government's further tightening of social distancing measures, the LCSD had already closed again its leisure and cultural venues/facilities from December 2, and the programmes to be organised or subvented by the LCSD were also cancelled starting from November 28 by phases. To relieve the impact of the epidemic and with a new injection into the Anti-epidemic Fund, a new round of ex-gratia payments will be arranged to those personnel engaged in these programmes, including coaches and instructors.

The ex-gratia payment will be offered again to those directly engaged by the LCSD, or sports coaches and staff hired by National Sports Associations (NSAs) or sports organisations (SOs) to conduct subvented programmes under the Sports Subvention Scheme, or sports coaches from NSAs or SOs who were engaged by the LCSD through the Direct Purchase Authority Management System to provide services. The amount of ex-gratia payment is equivalent to their full remuneration for the cancelled programmes scheduled to commence or to be held from November 28, 2020, to January 31, 2021.

Coaches and personnel benefiting from this subsidy scheme are not required to submit applications. The LCSD will release the ex-gratia payment to the personnel directly or through the relevant NSAs and SOs. Disbursement of the ex-gratia payment is expected to start in February 2021 in batches.

In addition, the LCSD will make the same arrangement and provide the ex-gratia payment to instructors and speakers of seminars and workshops organised by the Hong Kong Public Libraries whose programmes were cancelled and could not be rescheduled due to venue closures amid the epidemic. Part-time ushers and part-time ticketing assistants affected by the closure of cultural venues will also be provided with the ex-gratia payment.