

Red flag lowered at Silver Mine Bay Beach

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 announced today (April 19) that since the water off Silver Mine Bay Beach in Islands District is now suitable for swimming, the red flag has been lowered.

The red flag was hoisted at the beach earlier after a red tide was found.

Red flags hoisted at several beaches

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (April 19) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Stanley Main Beach, Shek O Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach in Islands District; and Silverstrand Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at these beaches.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the service demand surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Government invokes place-specific flight suspension mechanism

The Government announced today (April 18) the invocation of the place-specific flight suspension mechanism for India, Pakistan, and the Philippines. From 00:00 on April 20, all passenger flights from these places will be prohibited from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days. These places will also at the same time be specified as extremely high-risk Group A specified places under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Regulation of Cross-boundary Conveyances and Travellers) Regulation (Cap. 599H), so as to restrict persons who have stayed in these places from boarding for Hong Kong. The suspension will be effective for 14 days.

The Government implemented on April 14 the tightened flight-specific suspension mechanism, as well as the new place-specific flight suspension mechanism in parallel. Under the place-specific flight suspension mechanism, if a total of five or more passengers among all flights from the same place, regardless of airline, were confirmed by arrival tests for COVID-19 with the N501Y mutant strain within a seven-day period, the Government would invoke Cap. 599H to prohibit all passenger flights from that place from landing in Hong Kong for 14 days, and would at the same time specify that place as an extremely high-risk place under Cap. 599H to restrict persons who have stayed in that place for more than two hours from boarding passenger flights for Hong Kong for 14 days, so as to prevent persons from the relevant place from arriving at Hong Kong via transit.

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A Government spokesman said, "With confirmed cases involving the N501Y mutant strain detected for the first time in the community in Hong Kong, for prudence's sake, the Government has applied the criteria of the newly implemented place-specific flight suspension mechanism retrospectively for 14 days on places where there had been imported cases confirmed by arrival tests that carried the N501Y mutant strain. India, Pakistan, and the Philippines all had seven-day cumulative number of relevant cases that reached the relevant criteria in the past 14 days, and the Government will therefore invoke the place-specific flight suspension mechanism for these three places."

The place-specific suspension mechanism for these three places will be effective for 14 days from midnight on April 20. Relevant restrictions will include the prohibition of passenger flights from these places from landing

in Hong Kong, as well as specifying these three places as Group A specified places under Cap. 599H to restrict any person who have stayed in these places for more than two hours on the day of boarding or 21 days before that day from boarding for Hong Kong.

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At the same time, to enhance the testing of persons returning to Hong Kong from overseas places, the Government will issue a compulsory testing notice for persons who returned to Hong Kong from extremely high-risk places specified under Cap. 599H (that is the current Group A specified places). After completing the compulsory quarantine for 21 days as well as the testing on the 12th and 19th day during quarantine, these persons returning to Hong Kong will also need to self-monitor further for another seven days, and be subject to nucleic acid testing on the 26th day of their return to Hong Kong.

“The Government will continue to closely monitor the development of the global and local epidemic situation, and will further adjust the relevant inbound prevention and control measures as necessary,” the Government spokesman said.

Government to gazette compulsory testing notice

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 a compulsory testing notice, which requires any person who had been present at three specified premises during the specified period (persons subject to compulsory testing) to undergo a COVID-19 nucleic acid test.

For testing targeting at workplaces, if one or more confirmed cases are found in a workplace, it will be included in the compulsory testing notice.

Regarding the confirmed cases announced today (April 18), a premises fulfilling the above criteria is included in the compulsory testing notice. In addition, targeting a local case with unknown sources involving N501Y mutant strain announced yesterday (April 17), two places that had been patronised by the confirmed case are included in the compulsory testing notice.

A spokesman for the Food and Health Bureau said, “As one of the local cases with unknown sources announced yesterday involved N501Y mutant strain, we have to conduct more extensive compulsory testing targeting at the activities carried out and the places that had been patronised by the confirmed case. We appeal for the co-operation of members of the public to

stop the spread of the virus in the community together."

Details of the compulsory testing notice are as follows:

1. Any person who had been present at The Centrium, 60 Wyndham Street, Central, at any time during the period from March 29 to April 18, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), has to undergo testing by April 20, 2021.

2. Any person who had been present at Wellcome, Basement, 45-53 Austin Road or Harbour City (only the shopping mall is included), 3-27 Canton Road, Yau Tsim Mong at any time on April 11, 2021 (including but not limited to full-time, part-time and relief staff and visitors), has to undergo testing by April 20, 2021.

The spokesman reminded the public that in accordance with the compulsory testing notice issued earlier, all household members of close contacts are required to undergo compulsory testing. Any person who had lived with a person placed under quarantine pursuant to section 22 of the Prevention and Control of Disease Regulation (Cap. 599A) (person under quarantine) in the same residential unit on the date of commencement of quarantine or during the 14 days before that day, and who becomes aware of the quarantine of the person under quarantine when the relevant quarantine has not yet been completed, has to undergo testing within two days of him or her becoming aware that the person under quarantine has been placed under quarantine and report to the Government the result of the test by phone (at 6275 6901), fax (at 2530 5872) or email (ct@csb.gov.hk) within three days of undergoing the test.

The Government will set up a mobile specimen collection station at Pier 3 Car Park, Harbour City, Tsim Sha Tsui tomorrow (April 19) for staff and visitors of Harbour City subject to compulsory testing.

The mobile specimen collection station at Cheung Chau Sports Centre will be open from 8am to 8pm tomorrow, and from 10am to 8pm on April 20 (Tuesday). The service period of the mobile specimen collection station at Oi Fai House (Block 2) of Yau Oi Estate in Tuen Mun will be extended to April 20 (Tuesday), and open to all members of the public for testing.

The opening dates and operating hours of the mobile specimen collection stations in various districts providing free COVID-19 nucleic acid testing services for the general public are stated in Annex. Apart from mobile specimen collection stations, persons subject to compulsory testing can also choose to attend any of the community testing centres across the territory to receive testing free of charge. Persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the Centre for Health Protection reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations (if the service scope is applicable).

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 (DH) 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 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 notice.

"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 available 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 notices. Any person who fails to comply with the testing notices 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.

Relevant officers of different government departments are empowered to perform certain functions under the relevant Regulations under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), including requesting individuals to provide information and assistance when necessary. Any person who fails to comply with the relevant request commits an offence and would be liable to a fine at level 3 (\$10,000). Collection and use of any personal data for conducting COVID-19 tests must meet the requirements under the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486). Government departments or testing service providers which handle the relevant information may provide the data to the DH or other relevant departments for anti-epidemic purposes as necessary. The workflow does not involve the provision of any personal data to organisations or persons outside Hong Kong.

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."