

Update on cases of Legionnaires' disease

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (April 7) 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 March 28 to April 3, one community-acquired LD case was reported. The case involves a male patient aged 72 with good past health who lives in Capitol Mansion, Shau Kei Wan.

"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 April 3, eight LD cases had been reported this year. In 2020 and 2019, there were 104 and 105 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 leading to stagnant water; 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 which 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. A shower may also generate small aerosols; 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.

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.

[Effective Exchange Rate Index](#)

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, April 7, 2021 is 101.8 (down 0.6 against last Thursday's index).

An exceptionally warm and dry March

With relatively fewer cold air outbreaks from the north in March 2021, exceptionally warm weather persisted in Hong Kong. The monthly mean maximum temperature of 24.8 degrees, the monthly mean temperature of 22.0 degrees and the monthly mean minimum temperature of 20.2 degrees were 2.9 degrees, 2.5 degrees and 2.6 degrees above their corresponding normal figures respectively (or 3.4 degrees, 2.9 degrees and 3.0 degrees above their corresponding 1981-2010 normal figures respectively), making them the highest monthly mean values on record for March. The month was also much drier than usual with a total rainfall of only 3.5 millimetres, about 5 per cent of the norm of 75.3 mm (or about 4 per cent of the 1981-2010 norm of 82.2 mm), the fourth lowest on record for March. The accumulated rainfall recorded in the first three months of the year was 65.6 mm, a decrease of about 55 per cent compared to the norm of 147.4 mm (or about 59 per cent below the 1981-2010 norm of 161.3 mm) for the same period.

Under the influence of an easterly airstream, the weather of Hong Kong was mainly cloudy with sunny periods on the first day of March. As a cold front moved across the coast of Guangdong on the morning of March 2, the weather on that day was dry with sunny periods during the day and a few light rain patches in the morning and at night. The associated northeast monsoon and a band of clouds brought a few rain patches and slightly cooler weather to Hong Kong from March 3 to 4.

With the moderation of the northeast monsoon and the setting in of a humid maritime airstream, the weather of Hong Kong remained cloudy with a few rain patches and coastal fog from March 5 to 6. The visibility at Waglan Island once fell below 200 metres on March 6. Meanwhile, a trough of low pressure over southern China moved southwards gradually, resulting in a few showers and isolated thunderstorms on March 6. A few millimetres of rainfall were recorded generally over the territory on that afternoon, and the rainfall even exceeded 20 mm over the northern part of the New Territories.

A replenishment of the northeast monsoon reached the coast of Guangdong and brought cooler weather to the region on March 7. Local weather was cloudy with a few rain patches and the visibility was relatively low in some areas. The weather was a mixture of sunny intervals and a few rain patches the next day. With the cloud bands thinning out gradually, the weather of Hong Kong turned generally fine on the afternoon of March 9. Affected by a fresh to strong easterly airstream, the weather became cloudier with a few light rain patches on March 10. With the moderation of the easterly airstream and the thinning out of the clouds, the weather turned generally fine on the afternoon of March 11 and remained so the next day.

Local winds strengthened from the east once again and the weather became cloudier from March 13 to 14. With the setting in of a relatively dry

easterly airstream, the weather turned sunny and warm in Hong Kong in the next few days. Affected by a relatively humid easterly airstream, the weather became mainly cloudy with a few rain patches on March 18. With the clouds thinning out, the weather of Hong Kong became fine from March 19 to 20. With plenty of sunshine and under light wind conditions, the temperature recorded at the Hong Kong Observatory soared to a maximum of 29.7 degrees on the afternoon of March 20, the highest of the month. It was also the hottest Vernal Equinox on record.

A cold front moved across the coast of Guangdong on the morning of March 21 and brought cooler weather to the region. Under the influence of its associated northeast monsoon, local weather turned mainly cloudy that day and in the next few days. It was dry and appreciably cooler on March 22 with temperature recorded at the Hong Kong Observatory falling to a minimum of 15.8 degrees in the morning, the lowest of the month. With the clouds dissipating and the setting in of a ridge of high pressure, local weather became generally fine from March 25 to 26. Affected by a warm southerly airstream and an anticyclone aloft over the northern part of the South China Sea, the weather of Hong Kong was generally fine with hot afternoons for the rest of the month. The daily mean temperature on March 30 was 26.6 degrees, the highest on record for March. The daily minimum temperature on March 30 and 31 was 25.3 degrees, both the highest on record for March.

There were no tropical cyclones over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in March 2021.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in March are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from the norm for March are tabulated in Table 2.

Regular voluntary COVID-19 testing arrangement for frontline workers of designated ship services sector

â€‹The Transport and Housing Bureau (THB) will provide regular COVID-19 tests for frontline workers of the designated ship services sector, viz companies providing services such as bunkering and reprovisioning of necessities to ocean-going vessels (OGVs) and/or river trade vessels (RTVs), starting tomorrow (April 8), with a view to further safeguarding public health and the well-being of the frontline workers.

Further to the discussion between the THB and the designated ship services sector, regular tests will be arranged for frontline workers of the sector who may have contact with sea crews onboard OGVs or RTVs during their

course of operation.

The testing is voluntary. Frontline workers who wish to participate are required to be registered for taking the test at specific time slots every 14 days at the designated testing point (i.e. Hoi Kwai Road Public Transport Interchange, Tsuen Wan West). Duty officers of the testing institution will collect the combined nasal and throat swab specimens from the participating workers for examination. In case of a positive test result, the Centre for Health Protection, the THB and the respective companies will be notified for further follow-up action in accordance with the established mechanism.

The testing arrangement will last until July 31 tentatively. Afterwards, the testing arrangement will be reviewed having regard to the epidemic situation and the views of the health authorities. The Government will also maintain close communication with the designated ship services sector and closely monitor the effectiveness of the testing arrangement. Individual ship services operators may also continue with their ongoing arrangement for providing regular testing for their staff.

The THB appeals to frontline workers of the designated ship services sector to actively participate in the regular testing arrangement with a view to safeguarding public health and minimising the spreading of risk in the community. Frontline workers are also encouraged to participate in the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme as soon as possible to protect themselves, their families and the Hong Kong community as a whole. The COVID-19 Vaccination Programme website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en/) provides detailed and up-to-date information about the Vaccination Programme.

[Land Registry releases statistics for March](#)

The Land Registry today (April 7) released its statistics for March 2021.

Land registration

* The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in March was 9,067 (+19.9 per cent compared with February 2021 and +99.1 per cent compared with March 2020)

* The 12-month moving average for March was 6,952 (5.7 per cent above the 12-month moving average for February 2021 and 18.3 per cent above that for March 2020)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in March was \$78.0 billion (+21.3 per cent compared with February 2021 and +117.9 per cent compared with March 2020)

* Among the sale and purchase agreements, 7,444 were for residential units (+21.5 per cent compared with February 2021 and +92.4 per cent compared with March 2020)

* The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$69.3 billion (+21.8 per cent compared with February 2021 and +118.4 per cent compared with March 2020)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme and the Tenants Purchase Scheme unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

* The number of searches of land registers made by the public in March was 541,242 (+47.8 per cent compared with February 2021 and +32.5 per cent compared with March 2020)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.