

# Press statement in response to air change in restaurants

The Government made the following clarifications today (April 4) in response to recent comments on the air change requirement for catering businesses and the findings of a related site investigation at a restaurant in K11 Musea in early March 2020:

- The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) invited Professor KY Yuen, an expert in virology and infectious disease, to join a multidisciplinary team consisting of CHP epidemiologist, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD), the Environmental Protection Department etc. to conduct a visit to a restaurant in K11 Musea on March 1 to investigate the cause(s) of the cluster of confirmed COVID-19 cases. This was necessary as engineers and epidemiologists do not have expertise in virology and infectious diseases.
- The air flow measurements taken by the Government during the investigation was about the total outdoor air at the main supply air duct to the seating areas as well as double-checking with the air flow in supply air duct connection to each of the fan coil units where accessible. These sought to simulate the dine-in situations involving the occurrence of this unusual cluster.
- After the on-site investigation with airflow measurements by engineers, a meeting was chaired by Professor Yuen. All members of this multidisciplinary team listened to all the initial findings reported by different team members, and came up with a consensus of the initial findings and the corresponding recommendations. The conclusion was that the outbreak was more likely due to the low air change per hour (ACH) of 1.2 and 2.1 for certain parts of the dining area of the lower floor on which the outbreak occurred (though two other parts have ACH at 6.1 and 6.4), rather than due to transmission by contact at the adjacent tea room with virus-positive found in the environmental samples, though the latter may have also contributed to the outbreak.
- There was a comment that air ventilation of the seating area and the kitchen should be taken together for food premises. This is not true. The law requires separate ventilation systems for the seating area and the kitchen and the guide for application for restaurant licences has also made this point clear. The actual ventilation system for the

kitchen of the restaurant is in fact connected to the central system of K11 Musea and is completely independent of that for its seating area.

- We also wish to clarify that no Government departments, including the EMSD, have been commissioned to do any study referred to by the restaurant on March 31.
- While Professor Yuen did suggest the need of at least six ACH in eateries or putting in place air purifiers meeting certain specifications as an alternative, as short-range air-borne transmission of COVID-19 is now known to be important in indoor settings with poor ventilation and mask off activities, the Government did conduct literature review in August/September 2020 and take a view on adopting this threshold as the basis for the voluntary declaration system launched on October 16, 2020, which was now codified into the mandatory registration system.
- In summary, the experts involved in the K11 Musea investigation have considered all available evidence thoroughly and exercised their duty and judgement based on scientific evidence and professional knowledge. Current available information does not indicate any flaws in the investigation process. The requirements of ACH in eateries or air purifiers as an alternative are based on scientific evidence available, overseas guidelines and consensus of experts of relevant disciplines.

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## **FEHD takes stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations and joins inter-departmental joint operations during Easter holidays**

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) continued to take stringent enforcement actions relating to anti-epidemic regulations during Easter holidays. The FEHD stepped up inspections in various districts and conducted joint operations with the Police in Central and Western District, Eastern District, Yau Tsim District, Sai Kung District and Tuen Mun in the past two days (April 2 to 3). The FEHD today (April 4) reminded catering

business operators again to remain vigilant and strictly comply with the requirements and directions under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation).

A total of 92 catering premises were inspected during the joint operations, and 894 catering premises and 145 other premises were inspected by the FEHD on its own in the past two days. The FEHD initiated procedures on prosecution against 10 catering business operators suspected of breaching the requirements under the Regulation (among them, three were related to failure to ensure that customers scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" QR code or register their names, contact numbers and the dates and times of their visits before the persons are allowed to enter the premises, the remaining were related to distance or partition between tables, mask wearing and failure to arrange all staff to undergo COVID-19 test once every 14 days). Since the relevant requirements or restrictions were not adopted, on the subsequent day of being identified by the enforcement agent, corresponding measures for reducing the risk of transmission (i.e. selling or supplying food or drink for consumption on the premises must be ceased from 6pm to 4.59am of the subsequent day, and no more than two persons may be seated together at one table) had to be taken by the premises for periods of three (two cases), seven (two cases) and 14 days (six cases).

According to the current directions issued by the Secretary for Food and Health in relation to catering premises under the Regulation, if a person responsible for carrying on a catering business adopts a series of infection control measures, the premises can provide dine-in service until 9.59pm and no more than four persons may be seated together at one table. Some of the scheduled premises such as places of public entertainment may be open when the relevant requirements and restrictions are fulfilled. If a person responsible for carrying on a catering business or scheduled premises contravenes the regulations under the Regulation, he or she is liable to prosecution and, upon conviction, to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In addition, customers within catering premises in breach of the requirement on maximum number of persons seated together at one table are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for violating the Prevention and Control of Disease (Prohibition on Group Gathering) Regulation (Cap. 599G) while customers not wearing a mask when they are not eating or drinking at a table therein or they are not eating or drinking otherwise are liable to a fixed penalty of \$5,000 for contravening the Prevention and Control of Disease (Wearing of Mask) Regulation (Cap. 599I).

To minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19, the spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators to comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a concerted and persistent manner. He also reminded the operators concerned and members of the public to exercise self-discipline and co-operate to fight the virus together.

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## Labour Department investigates fatal work accident in Yuen Long

The Labour Department (LD) is investigating a fatal work accident that happened in Yuen Long this afternoon (April 4) in which a man died.

The LD immediately deployed staff to the scene upon receiving a report of the accident, and is now conducting an investigation to look into its cause.

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## Public hospitals daily update on COVID-19 cases

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

As at 9am today (April 4), six COVID-19 confirmed patients were discharged from hospital in the last 24 hours. So far, a total of 11 139 patients with confirmed or probable infection have been discharged.

At present, there are 651 negative pressure rooms in public hospitals with 1 197 negative pressure beds activated. A total of 127 confirmed patients are currently hospitalised in 21 public hospitals and the North Lantau Hospital Hong Kong Infection Control Centre, among which nine patients are in critical condition, three are in serious condition and the remaining 115 patients are in stable condition.

The Hospital Authority will maintain close contact with the Centre for Health Protection to monitor the latest developments and to inform the public and healthcare workers on the latest information in a timely manner.

Details of the above-mentioned patients are as follows:

Patient condition	Case numbers
Discharged	11296, 11366, 11368, 11382, 11425, 11459
Critical	1989, 6607, 6794, 8018, 8078, 9612, 9907, 10358, 10942
Serious	6386, 7468, 9055

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## Mobile specimen collection stations continue to provide COVID-19 testing service to public

Having reviewed the usage and public demand for the COVID-19 testing service, the Government has decided to extend the service period of the mobile specimen collection station at MCP Central, Tseung Kwan O to tomorrow (April 5).

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. Persons of certain targeted groups (including employees of designated scheduled premises and catering businesses, construction site personnel, school staff), persons subject to compulsory testing, as well as persons with "LeaveHomeSafe" COVID-19 exposure notification or SMS notification from the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) reminding them to undergo testing as soon as possible may receive free testing at community testing centres or mobile specimen collection stations (if service scope is applicable).

People whose test results are negative will be informed by SMS message through their mobile phones. Persons subject to compulsory testing must properly keep the relevant records. If any specimen tested shows a preliminarily positive COVID-19 result, the specimen will be referred to the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch of the DH for a confirmatory test. Confirmed cases will be followed up and announced by the CHP.

The Government reminds the public that they can undergo COVID-19 testing through various means. For details, please refer to the following webpage: [www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html](http://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html). If a person has symptoms, he or she should seek medical attention immediately and should not attend the mobile specimen collection stations or community testing centres.

The Government spokesman 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.