

Ombudsman probes Hospital Authority's assistive device loan service (with photo)

The following is issued on behalf of the Office of The Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman, Mr Jack Chan, today (June 10) announced the launch of a full investigation into the procedures and mechanisms currently employed by the Hospital Authority (HA) in providing an assistive device loan service to the public.

Hospitals under the HA have long provided patients and their families or carers with a loan service of assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, canes and walking frames to support patients in their daily routine and rehabilitation during recovery. While this service is undoubtedly beneficial to the public and worthy of support, available information indicates that the borrowing and returning procedures are rather cumbersome and overly stringent. For example, when a device is returned, the deposit payer must present the deposit receipt to collect the refund in person at the hospital; authorising a representative is not acceptable. Moreover, without the receipt, a refund will be denied even if the deposit payer visits the hospital in person and provides proof of the device's proper return.

Mr Chan said, "Assistive devices are essential to facilitating the early recovery and daily lives of patients with needs, and alleviating the burden on families and carers. The Office has noted that the HA's current loan arrangements may cause varying degrees of inconvenience to patients and their families and carers. Given the significant number of borrowers and a deposit as high as \$3,500 for each assistive device, denying refunds due to missing receipts would not only lead to conflicts, but also imposes a financial burden on patients and their families. In this light, I have decided to launch a full investigation into the HA's current procedures and mechanisms for assistive device loan services to identify any areas for improvement. Pertinent recommendations will be made for the benefit and convenience of the public."

The Ombudsman welcomes views from members of the public on this topic. Written submissions should reach the Office of The Ombudsman by July 10, 2025:

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Three property owners fined over \$410,000 in total for not complying with statutory orders

Three property owners were convicted and fined over \$410,000 in total by the court earlier for failing to comply with statutory orders issued under the Buildings Ordinance (BO) (Cap. 123).

The first case involved an unauthorised structure with an area of about 50 square metres on the roof of a village house in D.D.183, Sha Tin. Since the Lands Department would not issue a certificate of exemption for the unauthorised building works (UBWs) and the UBWs were carried out without prior approval and consent from the Buildings Department (BD), a removal order was served on the owner under section 24(1) of the BO. Failing to comply with the removal order, the owner was prosecuted by the BD and was fined \$128,300 in total, of which \$108,300 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Shatin Magistrates' Courts on June 4.

The second case involved two unauthorised structures with a total area of about 102 square metres on the flat roof of a residential building at Tsing Chui Path, Tuen Mun. As the UBWs were carried out without prior approval and consent from the BD, a removal order was served on the owner under section 24(1) of the BO. Failing to comply with the removal order, the owner was prosecuted twice by the BD and was fined \$22,760 in total upon conviction by the court. As the owner persisted in not complying with the removal order, the BD instigated the third prosecution in 2023. The owner was convicted and fined \$197,500 in total by the Court, of which \$97,500 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Tuen Mun Magistrates' Courts on June 4.

The third case involved alteration works at a composite building on Prince Edward Road West, Kowloon, including removal of two fire rated doors

on the eighth floor and at the yard on the ground floor respectively, and a door opening formed in the wall of the yard on the ground floor. The alteration works affected the fire resisting construction of the building and contravened the Building (Construction) Regulation. A removal order was served on the owner under section 24(1) of the BO. Failing to comply with the removal order, the owner was prosecuted by the BD and was fined \$85,060 in total, of which \$81,060 was the fine for the number of days that the offence continued, upon conviction at the Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts on May 21.

A spokesman for the BD said today (June 10), "Unauthorised building works, including unauthorised alterations affecting the fire-resisting construction of a building, may lead to serious consequences. The owners concerned must comply with the statutory orders issued by the BD without delay. The BD will continue to take enforcement action against owners who fail to comply with statutory orders, including instigation of prosecution, to ensure building safety."

Failure to comply with a removal order without reasonable excuse is a serious offence under the BO. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$200,000 and one year's imprisonment, and a further fine of \$20,000 for each day that the offence continues.

EMSD announces test results of LPG quality in May 2025

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) today (June 10) announced that the department collected eight liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) samples from auto-LPG filling stations and LPG terminals on a random basis in May 2025 for laboratory tests. The results show that the LPG quality of all these samples complied with auto-LPG specifications.

The detailed test results are available on the EMSD's website (www.emsd.gov.hk/en/gas_safety/lpg_vehicle_scheme/publications/general/results_of_lpg_sample_analysis/index.html). Enquiries can also be made to the EMSD's hotline on 2333 3762.

In addition, the EMSD has been vetting independent third-party test reports submitted by LPG supply companies for each shipment to ensure that the quality of imported LPG complies with the specified requirements.

CHP reminds public on precautions against heat stroke during very hot weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (June 10) reminded members of the public, particularly those undertaking outdoor activities, to take heed of necessary measures against heat stroke and sunburn in very hot weather.

"The public should carry and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration while engaging in outdoor activities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Those engaged in strenuous outdoor activities should avoid beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee and tea, as well as alcohol, as they speed up water loss through the urinary system," the spokesman explained.

"Infants and children, the elderly, pregnant women, those with chronic illnesses such as heart disease or high blood pressure, outdoor/manual workers, and individuals who are overweight are more vulnerable to heat stroke. They should pay special attention," the spokesman added.

The public should adopt the following precautions:

- Wear loose and light-coloured clothing to reduce heat absorption and facilitate sweat evaporation and heat dissipation;
- Avoid vigorous exercise and prolonged activities like hiking or trekking as heat, sweating and exhaustion can place additional demands on the physique;
- Perform outdoor activities in the morning or the late afternoon, if possible;
- For indoor activities, open all windows, use a fan or use air-conditioning to maintain good ventilation;
- Do not stay inside a parked vehicle; and
- Reschedule work to cooler times of the day if feasible. If working in a hot environment is inevitable, introduce shade in the workplace where practicable. Start work slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Move to a cool area for rest at regular intervals to allow the body to recuperate.

â€‹The public should also note the latest and the forecast Ultraviolet (UV) Index released by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO). When the UV Index is high (6 or above):

- Minimise direct exposure of the skin and the eyes to sunlight;
- Apply a broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen product with a sun

protection factor (SPF) of at least 30 or higher when participating in outdoor activities. Reapply every two hours if you need to stay outdoors for a prolonged period, or after swimming, sweating or towelling off;

- While using DEET-containing insect repellents for personal protection against mosquito-borne diseases, apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent;
- Seek shade;
- Wear UV-blocking sunglasses;
- Wear long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothes; and
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella.

â€œIf symptoms develop, such as dizziness, headache, nausea, shortness of breath or confusion, rest and seek help immediately, and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

â€œThe public may obtain more information from the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111), [heat stroke](#) page and [UV radiation](#) page; the HKO's Dial-a-Weather (1878 200), latest [weather report and forecast](#), [UV Index](#) and weather information for [hiking and mountaineering](#); and [press releases](#) of the Labour Department on precautions against heat stroke for outdoor workers and their employers when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force.

Very Hot Weather Warning issued

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning.

To prevent heat stroke, avoid prolonged activities outdoors.

If engaged in outdoor work or activities, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes. Stay in shaded areas as much as possible.

Drink plenty of water, and avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol.

If you feel sick, consult a doctor right away.