

LegCo Panel on Health Services

Prevention of the Spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome **Isolation of Block E of Amoy Garden**

Introduction

This paper informs Members of the Isolation Order issued by the Director of Health on 31 March 2003 to isolate Block E of Amoy Garden in Ngau Tau Kok, Kowloon Bay so as to prevent the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (commonly known as atypical pneumonia).

Present position

2. As at 1 pm 30 March 2003, the cumulative figure for patients admitted to public hospitals with severe acute respiratory syndrome is 530, among which 162 cases involve health care workers or medical students while the rest of the 368 cases include patients, patients' family members and visitors who have come into contact with the patients. A total of 60 patients have recovered from the disease and been discharged. Apart from 13 patients who received treatment only at a late stage or suffered from other illnesses and died afterwards, most of the other patients are in stable conditions and show improvement after treatment. There are 52 patients under treatment in the intensive care unit.

Isolation Order by the Director of Health

3. Among the 60 patients with symptoms of atypical pneumonia admitted to public hospitals on 30 March 2003, 36 were residents from Amoy Garden. So far, the total number of cases attributed to residents of the Amoy Garden, which consists of 19 blocks, is 121. Of these, 61 cases are from Block E alone. In view of the continued steep rise in the number of cases of infection in Block E of Amoy Garden in the past few

days, the Director of Health has ordered the building to be isolated for a period of 10 days starting from 6 am this morning (31 March) to prevent the spread of the disease. The Isolation Order, designed to protect the health of residents and the community as a whole, was issued under the authority granted under Section 24 of the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations, Cap. 141. A copy of the Isolation Order is at **Annex A**.

Details of the measure

4. The Isolation Order requires residents of Block E of Amoy Garden to remain in their flats until midnight on 9 April. During the isolation period, no one will be allowed to enter or leave the premises without express permission in writing of a health officer. Medical personnel from the Department of Health (DH) will visit residents' homes to conduct health inspections for them. Residents will be provided three meals a day free of charge. They will also receive help and advice to conduct thorough cleansing and disinfection of their flats. Staff of the Home Affairs Department will assist residents to take care of their daily needs. A copy of the letter issued by the Director of Health to the residents of the affected building is at **Annex B**.

5. A press release issued today (31 March) on the Isolation Order is at **Annex C**.

Progress of the isolation measure

6. The Director of Health has issued letters to all units in Block E informing residents therein of the details of the isolation measure at around 6 a.m. today. For those flats which were found to be vacant this morning, a copy of the letter has been posted on the door. Residents who were away from the Block at the time it was declared an isolated area will not be allowed to re-enter their flats except with the express permission of the Director of Health. However, for their own safety, they are urged to contact DH so that arrangement could be made for them to attend medical assessment at a designated clinic on a daily basis for 10 days.

7. Members are invited to note the contents of the paper.

Health, Welfare and Food Bureau

31 March 2003

Isolation Order

**(Section 24, Prevention of the Spread of
Infectious Diseases Regulations, Cap. 141)**

Having regard to the circumstances I, the Director of Health, consider it expedient for the prevention of the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, an infectious disease, to order the isolation of the whole premises at Block E, Amoy Garden, 77 Ngau Tau Kok Road, Ngau Tau Kok, Kowloon Bay, Hong Kong.

I hereby exercise the power conferred on me by section 24 of the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations and issue an isolation order in respect of the said premises to take effect from 0600 hours 31 March 2003 to 2400 hours 9 April 2003.

No person shall enter or leave the said premises or bring into or take out of the said premises any conveyance, animal, bird, food or thing except with the express permission in writing of a health officer. Any person who fails to comply with these restrictions shall be liable to prosecution.

Director of Health
31 March 2003

Residents of Block E of Amoy Garden,

We are now facing a very special situation. In the past few days, we have been alarmed by the dramatic increase in the number of Amoy Garden Block E residents being infected by the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Atypical Pneumonia) and the speed at which such infected cases appear to be rising. In order to protect the health of Block E residents and the health of the community as a whole, there is a need for us to exercise our legal powers to declare the isolation of the whole premises of Block E of Amoy Garden. The Isolation Order will take effect from 0600 hours 31 March 2003 to 2400 hours 9 April. We will review the validity period of the Isolation Order in the light of the then prevailing circumstances.

During the isolation period, no person shall enter or leave the premises of Block E of Amoy Garden without the express permission in writing of a health officer. In order to ensure that the Isolation Order is effectively implemented, the health officer will only grant permission to leave or enter the premises under very exceptional circumstances.

During this ten-day period, our medical personnel will visit your homes to conduct health inspections for your family members. We will also provide professional advice and guidelines on household cleansing and disinfection, masks, gloves and cleansing agents. We would like to appeal to you for your co-operation in following our advice and guidelines. The common areas of Block E of Amoy Garden will continue to be managed and cleaned by the building management company according to our guidelines. Through the co-operation of the residents, the building management company and the Government, we hope we would be able to contain the spread of the disease.

We are fully aware that individual residents will be concerned about the way in which their daily needs could be satisfied as well personal matters could be attended to. For this reason, the staff of the Home Affairs Department will pay you a visit later this morning to explain in detail the various services that could be made available at your disposal. In addition, we will provide you with breakfast, lunch and evening meal free of charge on a daily basis during the period of isolation.

We do understand that the measure that we have now taken will cause you great inconvenience. But because of the very special circumstances that we now face, we have no choice but resort to this exceptional measure and we sincerely ask for your forbearance, understanding and support in joining the community's fight against this

disease.

(Dr Margaret Chan)

Director of Health

31.3.2003

Annex C

Director of Health issues isolation order

Director of Health, Dr Margaret Chan, has ordered Block E of Amoy Garden in Ngau Tau Kok, Kowloon Bay, to be isolated for a period of 10 days starting from 6 am this morning (March 31) to prevent the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (commonly known as atypical pneumonia), a Government spokesman said.

The decision was taken because of the continued steep rise in the number of cases of infection in the building in the past few days.

The order, designed to protect the health of residents and the community as a whole, was issued under the authority granted under Section 24 of the Prevention of the Spread of Infectious Diseases Regulations, Cap. 141.

The order requires residents of Block E of Amoy Garden to remain in their flats until midnight on April 9.

During the isolation period, no one will be allowed to enter or leave the premises without express permission in writing of a health officer.

Medical personnel from the Department of Health will visit residents' homes to conduct health inspections for them. Residents will be provided three meals a day free of charge. They will also receive help and advice to conduct thorough cleansing and disinfection of their flats. Staff of the Home Affairs Department will be briefing residents on the detailed arrangements to take care of their daily needs.

“We do understand that the measures that we have now taken will cause residents great inconvenience. But because of the very special circumstances that we now face, we have no choice but resort to this exceptional measure and we sincerely ask for residents' forbearance, understanding and support in joining the community's fight against this disease.” the spokesman said.

Attention News Editors:

The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr E.K. Yeoh; the Director of Health, Dr Margaret Chan; and the Acting Director of Home Affairs, Miss Janet Wong, will hold a press conference on the isolation order at 9:30am at the Information Services Department Press Conference Room, 7/F Murray Building, Garden Road, Central.