

Information Note
LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene

Improvement Measures for Public Cemeteries

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene held on 12 October 2007, the Administration was asked to provide a summary of the improvement measures on the management and operation of public cemeteries that have been implemented since 2004. Please see the summary at **Annex**.

Food and Health Bureau
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
January 2011

**Improvement Measures on
Management and Operation of Public Cemeteries
implemented since 2004**

(a) Registration of masons

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) has required masons to register. Registered masons are requested to comply with a number of requirements, including the requirement for their workers to make advance booking for carrying out work on site, and to report to FEHD staff before commencement of and upon completion of work. Masons not complying with the requirements may be subject to cancellation of registration. The register of masons has been uploaded onto the FEHD website and is updated regularly.

(b) Enhanced management of urn space

- For new urn space, the area for interment is delineated. Sign post showing the section/number is erected at the space.
- After interment, FEHD staff will conduct inspection within two days following erection of the headstone by relatives.
- For exhumed urn space, a stone tablet showing the section/number is erected at the space.

For all the above situations, photographs of the urn space will be taken for record purpose.

(c) Enhanced management of exhumation

Before commencement of exhumation work, FEHD staff will identify the grave together with the mason's workers. FEHD staff will monitor the exhumation work until its completion and will take photographs for record purpose.

(d) Refinement of application forms for coffin/skeletal burial

When filling in the application forms, applicants are required to provide the name of the deceased to be inscribed on the headstone, the designated location for burial, etc. The FEHD will keep electronic records of the information provided, and will conduct site inspections and take photographs after erection of headstones by relatives.

(e) Updating of urn grave records and affixing of stone tablets

- The FEHD has collated and updated all urn grave records at the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery. Site maps have been prepared showing the location of each urn grave. The FEHD also affixed stone tablets showing the name of the deceased and the grave number at occupied urn graves without headstones or with seriously damaged headstones.
- Besides, the FEHD is in the course of collating and updating urn grave records and preparing site maps for other public cemeteries.

(f) Enhanced security

The FEHD has put in place CCTV at various locations in the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery and set up a 24-hour guard post at the main entrance. Guard booths are also provided at four main road junctions in the Cemetery (viz. the Gallant Garden/Tribute Garden, the communal grave and two junctions leading to different urn burial areas) with guard patrol service from 6:30am to 7:30pm. Fences have also been erected at the boundaries of both the Gallant Garden and the Tribute Garden.

(g) Delineating vaults in the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery

With a view to delineating more accurately the location and area of coffin burial vaults in the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery, the FEHD has been carrying out delineation works by phases. The delineated vaults in Phase I have been in use since October 2010.

(h) Refinement of operational guidelines

The FEHD has refined operational guidelines to enhance the management of public cemeteries. The revised guidelines have set out in detail actions to be taken by cemetery staff in handling unauthorised burials and exhumation matters, checking the accuracy of inscription on headstones, monitoring procedures over burials, exhumation and erection of headstones, as well as follow-up actions on cases with irregularities detected, etc.

(i) Enhanced staff training

The FEHD has engaged a management consultant to provide training to its staff to enhance their communication skills with the bereaved and their responsiveness. The scope of training includes understanding grief and bereavement, the skills to get along with the bereaved and learning more about the community resources for the bereaved. There are also role play exercises for staff to learn to handle different situations.

(j) Enhanced publicity

To enhance public knowledge of cemetery and crematorium-related services provided by the FEHD, a booklet entitled “A Guide for After-Death Arrangements” was published in June 2010, covering all necessary procedures in the handling of matters concerning the deceased, i.e. application for the death certificate, funeral arrangements, application for cremation/burial, specifications of coffin for cremation, exhumation of remains, disposal of cremated ashes, etc. The booklet also includes information on exporting human remains out of Hong Kong, organ donation, on-line memorial service, etc. The booklet has been uploaded onto the FEHD website, and can be obtained at mortuaries, hospitals, district offices of the Home Affairs Department, subvented elderly homes, non-governmental organisations involved in elderly services, funeral services-related establishments, the FEHD Environmental Hygiene District Offices and Resource Centre, etc.