

Press Releases

Government and Working Group strive together with stakeholders to assist dine-in catering premises in improving air change or installing air purifiers

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to the catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, together with relevant government departments continued to proactively co-operate with stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors, and are committed to assisting them to smoothly implement the requirement, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises.

Further to a meeting with the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong on April 23, the Working Group together with the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department held a webinar today (April 27) attended by stakeholders from the catering sector through the invitation of the Efficiency Office in support of the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee. Attendees exchanged views on matters of mutual concern candidly and would strive together to comply with relevant requirements. The Working Group has also uploaded to the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/question_air-changes_purification.html) a set of frequently-asked questions and answers to address issues of concerns raised by the trade and specialist contractors, and will later on upload video of the webinar following editing to the FEHD's webpage.

A Government spokesman reminded catering business operators that in order to comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, they are required to register with the FEHD on or before April 30 that the air change per hour at seating areas of their premises has reached at least six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). As at April 26, 2 995 catering premises have submitted online registrations and another 129 have submitted online declarations before March 18 through the voluntary declaration scheme. The FEHD is also constructing a thematic page to facilitate different stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors in browsing and searching relevant materials with a view to assisting them in completing the registration.

"Catering premises must submit an application of extension to the FEHD if they are unable to complete the registration on time. The application form can be downloaded from the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Application_for_extension_of_time_for_registration_on_air_change_installation_of_air_purifier_in_catering_premises.html) or by scanning the QR code in the attachment. After submitting the application,

catering business operators must complete the registration within the deadline specified in the FEHD's reply. In the meantime, premises which have submitted such an application may observe the time limit applicable to the daily dine-in service and be subject to the cap on the number of persons that may be seated at one table etc. in accordance with the applicable directions prevailing at the time. The FEHD will handle separately cases which did not apply for extension or where their applications have been rejected or failed to follow up completing the registration within the extended time limit specified by the FEHD. During the initial stage of the implementation of the new requirement, the department will focus on publicity and education as well as providing advice, and will closely monitor the relevant situation and adjust the arrangements in due course," the spokesman said.

The spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators to fight the virus together, and strictly comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a persistent manner to protect personal and public health.

Ends/Tuesday, April 27, 2021
Issued at HKT 22:34

NNNN

Press Releases

Government and Working Group strive to assist dine-in catering premises in improving air change or installing air purifiers (with video)

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to the catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, together with relevant government departments have been proactively maintaining close liaison with different stakeholders including catering business operators and ventilation works contractors, and are committed to assisting them to smoothly implement the requirement, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises.

The Working Group and relevant government departments today (April 23) convened a meeting with the Real Estate Developers Association of Hong Kong during which representative from several developers and the Link Asset Management Limited (LINK) also attended. They were briefed on the key concepts and relevant follow-up arrangements regarding enhancement of air change of premises and installation of air purifiers, and their queries addressed. Besides, it was hoped that they could appeal to shopping mall owners to provide assistance to catering premises as far as practicable in terms of providing fresh air supply. Attendees showed their support to fight the virus together and the work of the Working Group.

The Working Group and relevant government departments will organise a webinar on April 27 (Tuesday) to help the trade to master the relevant requirements, and for direct communication between catering business operators and specialist contractors (ventilation works category), so that the relevant ventilation requirement can be implemented promptly.

According to information obtained by the Working Group, there is a stock of around 36 000 air purifiers of models that meet the specified specifications available in the market. Yet individual demand and supply may be subject to commercial considerations.

In addition, the Working Group and relevant government departments visited a number of catering premises (including a bar, a Chinese restaurant, a Hong Kong-style tea restaurant and a hotel restaurant) earlier to learn more about their successful examples and experiences of difficulties encountered.

A Government spokesman said, "To comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, catering business operators are required to register with the FEHD on or before April 30 that the air change per hour (ACH) at seating areas of their premises has reached at least six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered

specialist contractor (ventilation works category). As at April 22, 2 034 catering premises have submitted online registrations and another 129 have submitted online declarations before March 18 through the voluntary declaration scheme."

"Catering premises must submit an application of extension to the FEHD if they are unable to complete the registration on time. The application form was uploaded to the FEHD's webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Application_for_extension_of_time_for_registration_on_air_change_installation_of_air_purifier_in_catering_premises.html). After submitting the application, catering business operators must complete the registration within the deadline specified in the FEHD's reply. In the meantime, premises which have submitted such an application may provide dine-in service until 9.59pm and be subject to no more than four persons seated together at one table. The FEHD will handle separately cases which did not apply for extension or where their applications have been rejected or failed to follow up completing the registration within the extended time limit specified by the FEHD. However, during the initial stage of the implementation of the new requirement, the department will focus on publicity and education as well as providing advice, and will closely monitor the relevant situation and adjust the arrangements in due course," the spokesman added.

Regarding the directions that the ACH at seating areas of dine-in catering premises must reach at least six, the spokesman reiterated that although there is currently no gold standard worldwide on ventilation requirements for catering premises in response to prevention of COVID-19 transmission, it is generally agreed that improving ventilation measures could assist in minimising the risk of the spread of virus. With reference to various literature around the world, including ventilation standards applicable to non-residential buildings, relevant scientific and clinical research, and information provided by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers of the United Kingdom and others on design guidelines for ventilation systems at public venues (including catering premises), the Government, after considering relevant factors including effectiveness of the measures and the affordability of the trade, took on board last October the ACH at seating areas of catering premises at six as the threshold for the voluntary declaration system, and announced in March its codification into the mandatory registration system. The ACH at six is equivalent to providing 27 cubic metres of outside air per hour for each person, which is higher than 17 cubic m per hour per person as stipulated under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132).

The spokesman strongly appealed to catering business operators to fight the virus together, and strictly comply with the relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease in a persistent manner to protect personal and public health.

Ends/Friday, April 23, 2021
Issued at HKT 20:48

NNNN

Press Releases

Government and Working Group assist dine-in catering premises in improving air change or installing air purifiers with multi-pronged approach (with photos)

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to the catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F) (the Regulation). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, together with various government departments have been adopting a multi-pronged approach in assisting catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors to smoothly implement the requirement, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises.

In support of the goal of completing the registration by catering premises operators by April 30, the Working Group convened its third meeting yesterday (April 19) to review the work progress over the past month and discuss the specific work for the next stage. On assisting catering premises operators and specialist contractors (ventilation works category), the progress made by the Working Group and relevant government departments was as follows:

(a) an online platform, with a link to the webpage of the Buildings Department (www.bd.gov.hk/en/resources/online-tools/registers-search/registrationsearch.html) containing the list of 180 specialist contractors (ventilation works category), was launched by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) on March 18 for registration in respect of catering premises;

(b) meetings were held with trade representatives from the trades of catering premises, specialist contractors (ventilation works category), electrical appliance suppliers and the hotels;

(c) a list of air purifiers meeting the specified specifications was announced and uploaded to the FEHD's website on April 1. The composite list (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Information_air-changes_purification.html) has been updated in response to the supplementary information made by the submitters from time to time. As at April 19, a total of 305 air purifiers met the specified specifications; and

(d) A Guide on Compliance with the Requirement on Air Change/Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/guide_on_compliance_with_requirement_on_air_change.html) was promulgated on April 11 with a video uploaded to the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Reference_Video_for_ACH-Air_purifier.mp4) to enable the trade to master the essential points on specific technical details and facilitate expeditious follow-up arrangements for the prompt implementation of the relevant ventilation requirement.

At yesterday's meeting, the Working Group and relevant government departments agreed on the follow-up work below as the plan for the next stage:

- (a) continue to enhance publicity and education with a view to assisting the trade in grasping the key concepts and relevant follow-up arrangements regarding enhancement of air change of premises and installation of air purifiers;
- (b) organise a webinar for direct communication between catering business operators and specialist contractors (ventilation works category);
- (c) according to information obtained by the Working Group, there is a stock of around 36 000 air purifiers of which the models meet the specified specifications available in the market. Yet individual demand and supply may be subject to commercial considerations; and
- (d) continue to meet with representatives of the trades and the stakeholders.

The Working Group and relevant government departments today (April 20) visited a number of catering premises (including a bar, a Chinese restaurant, a Hong Kong-style tea restaurant and a hotel restaurant) to learn more about their successful examples and experiences of difficulties faced. A video of the experience sharing will be uploaded to the FEHD's webpage later with a view to assisting other cases in finding appropriate solutions.

A Government spokesman said, "To comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, catering premises operators are required to register with the FEHD on or before April 30 that the air change per hour at seating areas of their premises has reached six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). As at April 19, 1 317 catering premises have submitted online registrations and another 129 have submitted online declarations before March 18 through the voluntary declaration scheme.

"Catering premises must submit an application of extension to the FEHD if they are unable to complete the registration on time. The FEHD will consider each case based on individual circumstances. Individual catering premises operators, after having taken reasonably practicable steps in an attempt to meet the relevant requirement, do not have to be overly worried and they may, if necessary, download the form from the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Application_for_extension_of_time_for_registration_on_air_change_installation_of_air_purifier_in_catering_premises.html) and submit the application in accordance with the instructions on the website. If the application is approved, the catering premises must complete the registration within the deadline specified by the FEHD. During the initial stage of the implementation of the new requirement, the department will focus on publicity and education as well as providing advices, and will closely monitor the relevant situation and adjust the arrangements in due course," the spokesman added.

The Chairman of the Working Group, Professor Yuen Pak-leung, said, "Our common goal is to restore to normality in a gradual

and orderly manner under the premise of upholding the anti-epidemic principles. Working together to implement relevant ventilation requirement as soon as possible can protect the health of staff, customers and the public, and fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises. We hope to be able to refrain from using a 'stop and go' approach on the catering industry, in face of the epidemic situation in future."

Regarding the requirement stipulated under the Regulation that the air change per hour (ACH) at seating areas of dine-in catering premises must reach at least six, the Government spokesman stressed that although there is currently no uniform standard across the world on ventilation requirements for catering premises in response to prevention of COVID-19 transmission, it is generally agreed that improving ventilation measures could assist in infection control. With reference to various materials around the world, including ventilation standards applicable to non-residential buildings, relevant scientific and clinical research, and information provided by the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers of the United Kingdom and others on design guidelines for ventilation systems at public venues (including catering premises), the Government, after balancing relevant factors including effectiveness of the measures and the affordability of the trade, took on board in last October the ACH at seating areas of catering premises at six as the threshold for the voluntary declaration system, which has been codified into the mandatory registration system this March. The ACH at six is equivalent to 27 cubic metres per hour per person, which is higher than 17 cubic m per hour per person as stipulated under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance (Cap. 132).

Ends/Tuesday, April 20, 2021
Issued at HKT 19:43

NNNN

Press Releases

Working Group promulgates Guide on Compliance with Requirement on Air Change / Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in catering premises in the directions in relation to catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, has promulgated "A Guide on Compliance with the Requirement on Air Change / Air Purifiers in Seating Areas of Dine-in Catering Premises" (the Guide) for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors.

A spokesman for the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) said today (April 12), "Guided by the principle of professionalism and pragmatism, the Working Group formulated the Guide to provide specific technical details in an in-depth and yet user-friendly manner. This will enable the trades to master the essential points and facilitate expeditious follow-up arrangements, so as to facilitate the prompt implementation of the relevant requirement."

The Guide consists of various sections, including theoretical basis; calculation of air change per hour (ACH); feasible measures to improve ACH; rationale for air purifiers meeting specified specifications as alternative; standards required of meeting specified specifications; points to note and observe relating to safety precautions on installation, application, repair and maintenance covering electrical works, building services and fire safety aspects; registration procedures and transparency measures; procedural steps for ventilation works contractors; and schematic presentation of workflow.

On March 31, 2021, the Working Group held a press briefing to make public how to use engineering control means for enhancing ventilation, apart from announcing a list of air purifiers that met the specified specifications. As foreshadowed at that announcement, its secretariat ceased accepting late submissions of forms on device information from 5pm on April 11. The Working Group will expeditiously follow up and consolidate the information received recently and update the composite list as soon as possible.

The Chairman of the Working Group, Professor Yuen Pak-leung, said, "I am grateful for the efforts of the working group members with extensive professional expertise and experience in formulating the Guide, and I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Centre for Health Protection, the FEHD, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Buildings Department and the Hong Kong Fire Services Department for views provided in relation to their professional fields. The Guide would help catering premises operators and ventilation contractors in identifying functional and cost effective solutions according to their circumstances for the smooth compliance of the requirement, so as to protect the health of

staff, customers and the public, and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises."

To comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, catering premises operators are required to register at the FEHD's webpage on or before April 30 that the ACH at seating areas of their premises has reached six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). Catering premises completing the registration may, upon confirmation by the FEHD, download a notice at the FEHD's webpage for display at the entrance of the premises.

The Guide, together with related videos, have been uploaded to the FEHD's website (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/guide_on_compliance_with_requirement_on_air_change.html) for browsing and downloading.

Ends/Monday, April 12, 2021
Issued at HKT 10:15

NNNN

Press Releases

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:

- 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.

Ends/Sunday, April 4, 2021
Issued at HKT 22:05

NNNN

Press Releases

Working Group completes composite list of air purifiers meeting specified specifications

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in restaurants in the directions in relation to catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, announced today (April 2) that among information of some 500 models of air purifiers received before the deadline on March 28, air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have all been uploaded onto the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s webpage for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors. The composite list (listed in alphabetical order of individual brand names) may be downloaded via the following webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Information_air-changes_purification.html).

Following the first batch announced yesterday (April 1), perusal of the information on air purifiers received before the deadline on March 28 has been completed. Among some 500 models of air purifiers received, information of a number of individual forms was incomplete, and there is altogether a total of 143 air purifiers meeting the specified specifications. The secretariat of the Working Group has approached those submitters through e-mails, requiring them to provide the missing information before 5pm on April 11. Also, after the deadline on March 28, the secretariat of the Working Group has received many late submissions and is handling them pragmatically. To facilitate the trades to make early preparation, the Working Group will simultaneously cease accepting late submissions from 5pm on April 11. After April 11, depending on the information received and follow-up work undertaken, the composite list may need to be updated. Persons concerned should pay attention to this.

To comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, catering premises operators are required to register at the FEHD's webpage on or before April 30 that the air change per hour at seating areas of their premises has reached six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). Catering premises completing the registration may, upon confirmation by the FEHD, download a notice at the FEHD's webpage for display at the entrance of the premises.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "To assist catering premises operators and ventilation works contractors in smoothly implementing the requirement, the Working Group has worked relentlessly, in order to announce the list of air purifiers that meet the specified specifications soonest possible. The Government is very grateful to all concerned involved in compiling the list of air purifiers, in working non-stop during this period and completing the compilation of the composite list within a short time. This has helped the smooth compliance of the

requirement on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises."

Ends/Friday, April 2, 2021

Issued at HKT 23:03

NNNN

Press Releases

Working Group announces list of air purifiers meeting specified specifications

The Secretary for Food and Health has earlier stipulated a requirement on air change or air purifiers to be complied with in dine-in restaurants in the directions in relation to catering business under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Requirements and Directions) (Business and Premises) Regulation (Cap. 599F). The Working Group, established for the smooth implementation of the requirement, announced today (April 1) that air purifiers that meet the specified specifications will be uploaded onto the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD)'s webpage (www.fehd.gov.hk/english/licensing/guide_general_reference/Information_air-changes_purification.html) by batches, for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation contractors.

The Working Group has earlier invited suppliers to provide information on their air purifiers that meet the specified specifications, and information of around 500 models of air purifiers were received by the deadline. The Working Group is making its best endeavours to offer views on whether the information submitted by suppliers should be able to match the specified specifications in the directions. If the information of an individual form is incomplete, the Working Group will contact the submitter to follow up.

Balancing considerations like the need of the Working Group to handle the massive information prudently while the wish of the trades for the information to be made known soonest possible, the Working Group has decided to handle and announce the information by batches according to the timing of submitting the forms; to list the devices in a batch in alphabetical order of their individual brand names; and to strive to complete the handling and announcement of the full list of air purifiers that meet the specified specifications in the shortest time possible. The first batch of air purifiers meeting specified specifications has been uploaded to the webpage. The Working Group will continue to review the remaining information and update the list indefatigably.

To comply with the requirements on air change or air purifiers in catering premises under the Regulation, catering premises operators are required to register at the FEHD's webpage on or before April 30 that the air change per hour at seating areas of their premises has reached six, or air purifiers that meet the specified specifications have been installed according to the on-the-ground situation, together with a certificate issued by a registered specialist contractor (ventilation works category). Catering premises completing the registration may, upon confirmation by the FEHD, download a notice at the FEHD's webpage for display at the entrance of the premises.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "The Working Group has formulated an initial draft of the guidelines on air change and air purifiers at catering premises. After consulting departments concerned, the Working Group will announce the guidelines soonest possible, for reference by catering premises operators and ventilation contractors."

The spokesman continued, "The Working Group assists in compiling the list of air purifiers, which will help the smooth compliance of the requirement by catering premises operators and ventilation contractors, so as to protect the health of staff, customers and the public, and to fortify the public's confidence in patronising catering premises." He appealed to catering premises operators to strictly comply with relevant regulations on prevention and control of disease to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

Ends/Thursday, April 1, 2021

Issued at HKT 0:57

NNNN