

Hong Kong's multi-pronged response to the novel coronavirus

Overview

The HKSAR Government has implemented a **comprehensive and co-ordinated** approach to **contain the spread of the novel coronavirus** and **protect the health** of the community while maintaining Hong Kong's position as an international city and aviation hub. The Government response is guided by **three key principles**: responding promptly, staying alert to the situation, and working in an open and transparent manner.

Emergency arrangements

- On **January 4**, the Government activated the "**Serious Response Level**" for the "Preparedness and Response Plan for Novel Infectious Disease of Public Health Significance" (Preparedness and Response Plan).
- On **January 25**, the Government activated the "**Emergency Response Level**" of the Preparedness and Response Plan.
- The Chief Executive Carrie Lam chairs the **Steering Committee-Command Centre** to oversee concerted efforts to fight the disease. First meeting held on January 26.
- The Chief Executive has set up an **expert advisory panel**, comprising four world-renowned experts, to advise the Government in a direct and timely manner.
- The Government will set up a **\$10 billion (US\$1.28 billion) relief fund** to provide resources needed to fight the virus.

Reducing the flow of people between Hong Kong and the Mainland

- From **February 8**, all persons **arriving from the Mainland, or who had visited the Mainland in the preceding 14 days**, will be subject to **mandatory quarantine** for 14 days (except for certain exempted persons carrying out essential cross-boundary services for the normal operation and daily needs of Hong Kong).
- From **February 4**, the Government **closed all but two land boundary control points** (Shenzhen Bay and Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge) with the Mainland to stem the flow of cross-boundary travel.
- Entry points at **Shenzhen Bay Port, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge** as well as **Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) remain open** with customs and health monitoring resources concentrated at these entry points.
- **Health declarations for all incoming visitors** are required at land-based control points and HKIA.
- From **February 1**, HKIA implemented **body temperature checks for departing passengers** (in line with WHO advice) in addition to temperature checks for **all incoming passengers**. Those with fever are prevented from boarding until cleared.
- From **January 27**, **Hubei residents** and those who have **visited Hubei Province** in the past 14 days (except Hong Kong residents) are **barred from entering Hong Kong**.
- On **January 24**, **flights between Hong Kong and Hubei Province suspended**.

- From **January 30, flights** between Hong Kong and other Mainland cities have been **reduced by about half in stages**.
- **All rail services** of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Intercity Through Train are **suspended**.
- Immigration clearance facilities at **Kai Tak Cruise Terminal** and **Ocean Terminal** are **suspended**.
- **Ferry services** to the **Mainland** and all **Macao ferry** services **suspended from February 4**.
- Mainland authorities have **suspended** the **Individual Visit Scheme for Mainland residents** visiting Hong Kong.
- As a result of the above measures, the **number of arrivals** in Hong Kong via all control points (including airport) has **dropped significantly**. (Total arrivals on January 1 were 421,844; on January 15 they were 372,755; on January 31 they had dropped to 140,859. By February 4 they had further dropped to 69,812 and on February 9 the number fell to 29,015).

Enhanced quarantine arrangements for people at risk of carrying the infection

- People who have had **close contact with confirmed coronavirus cases** but are asymptomatic will be **placed under quarantine** at dedicated quarantine centres.
- People returning to Hong Kong **after visiting Hubei Province** in the past 14 days will be placed under **compulsory quarantine** for 14 days.
- From **February 8, all** persons **arriving from the Mainland** or **who have visited the Mainland in the past 14 days** will be subject to **mandatory quarantine** for 14 days (except for certain exempted persons carrying out essential cross-boundary services for the normal operation and daily needs of Hong Kong).
- Those placed under mandatory quarantine will be **subject to regular and surprise checks** (phone calls, visits) to ensure they are at the intended place of quarantine.
- A locally-developed smart bracelet connected to the user's smartphone will be used in some cases to ensure people comply with quarantine requirements.
- Anyone who **fails to comply** will be subject to a maximum penalty of **6 months in prison and a \$25,000 fine**.
- **Three holiday camps** with a total of 97 units have been **designated as quarantine centres**. Additional facilities are being identified and prepared.
- **All suspected cases** will be admitted to **isolation beds** in hospitals.
- **Rapid testing** is available **in public hospital** laboratories to shorten the waiting time for test results.

Promoting "social distancing" to prevent the spread of the coronavirus

- **Classes** at all Hong Kong schools are **suspended until March 1** at the earliest.
- A "**work from home**" arrangement has been implemented for **Government employees**, except for those providing emergency, essential and limited basic public services. This arrangement will **remain in place until February 16** at earliest.
- The Government **urges employers to make flexible work arrangements** for employees according to their operational needs.
- The Government will continue to **cancel or postpone events** that attract large crowds.

Boosting supply of surgical masks

- To meet high demand, the Government is taking a **multi-pronged approach** to increase the supply of surgical masks including **sourcing globally, increasing local production, liaising with mask suppliers in the Mainland** and seeking assistance from relevant authorities to help supplies reach Hong Kong.
- **Priorities** include meeting the **needs of healthcare workers** and other **personnel providing services to the public**, as well as stabilising the market supply.
- Private and charitable organisations are urged to donate surgical masks to the underprivileged.

Transparent communication with the public

- **Daily briefings** are held to regularly **update the media and the public** on the latest developments, including the number of cases and new measures related to novel coronavirus.
- **Press conferences** are held by **senior officials** to announce major government decisions and anti-coronavirus measures etc.
- The **Centre for Health Protection** has launched a **dedicated webpage** with useful information and updates on latest developments: www.chp.gov.hk/en/features/102465.html.

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