

Hong Kong's multi-pronged response to COVID-19

Overview

The HKSAR Government has implemented a **comprehensive and co-ordinated** approach to **contain the spread of** COVID-19 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 6**, a **Steering Committee was formed** under the Preparedness and Response Plan.
- On **January 8**, the novel coronavirus was included in the **Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance**.
- On **January 23**, the **first quarantine centre was activated**, immediately after the first two confirmed cases of infection in Hong Kong were identified.
- 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 has set up a **\$30 billion (US\$3.9 billion) anti-epidemic fund** to provide resources needed to fight the virus and ease the burden on people and businesses.

Reducing the flow of people between Hong Kong and the Mainland

- From **February 8**, **all persons arriving from the Mainland or who have visited the Mainland in the past 14 days** will be subject to compulsory **quarantine** for 14 days (certain categories of people are exempted this requirement such as those supplying goods or services required for the normal operation of Hong Kong or the daily needs of the people in Hong Kong, etc.).
- 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, 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 and high speed rail services between** Hong Kong and **Wuhan 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**.
- On **February 5**, immigration services at **Kai Tak Cruise Terminal** and **Ocean Terminal** are **suspended**.
- **All ferry services** to and from the **Mainland** and **Macao are suspended** (except services of the SkyPier at the airport).
- 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 March 17 the number was 18,686).

Enhanced quarantine arrangements for people at risk of carrying the infection

- People who have had **close contact with confirmed COVID-19 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 at a quarantine centre** 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 compulsory **quarantine** for 14 days (certain categories of people are exempted this requirement such as those supplying goods or services required for the normal operation of Hong Kong or the daily needs of the people in Hong Kong, etc.).
- Hong Kong has imposed **quarantine arrangements on inbound travellers** who have visited, in the previous 14 days, a number of overseas countries and regions affected by COVID-19:
 - 1. Quarantine at quarantine centre** – People arriving in Hong Kong who have been to the following countries/areas in the past 14 days, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents, will have to stay in a quarantine centre for quarantine:
 - Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do in Korea
 - Iran
 - Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto regions in Italy
 - 2. Compulsory home quarantine** – people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to the following countries/areas in the past 14 days, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents, will be subject to compulsory home quarantine:

- Hokkaido in Japan
 - Korea (except Daegu and Gyeongsangbuk-do)
 - Schengen Area in Europe (except Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy and Veneto regions in Italy)
Note: Schengen Area in Europe - Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Principality of Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Republic of Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland
- Starting from 0.00am on March 19, people arriving in Hong Kong who have been to any overseas countries/territories in the past 14 days, regardless of whether they are Hong Kong residents, will be subject to compulsory quarantine.
 - Between **February 19 and 23**, for Hong Kong **passengers on board the Diamond Princess** cruise ship in Japan, the Government arranged three free chartered flights to bring a total of 193 Hong Kong residents who had tested negative for COVID-19, back to Hong Kong. After their arrival at Hong Kong, they were taken to the quarantine centre in Chun Yeung Estate for quarantine observation for 14 days.
 - On **March 4 and 5**, for Hong Kong residents in Hubei province, the Government arranged 4 free chartered flights to bring a total of 469 people back to Hong Kong. After their arrival at Hong Kong, they were taken to the quarantine centre in Chun Yeung Estate for quarantine observation for 14 days.
 - The Government would arrange the second batch of chartered flights to take Hong Kong residents currently stranded in Xiaogan, Xianning, Huangshi and Wuhan in Hubei Province back to Hong Kong on **March 24** at the earliest.
 - 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.
 - Contravening the quarantine requirement would be a **criminal offence**. Offenders are subject to a **maximum fine of HK\$25,000 and imprisonment for six months**.
 - The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) advises members of the public to **consider delaying all non-essential travel** outside Hong Kong.
 - Currently, there are **three operating quarantine centres**, namely the **Chai Wan Lei Yue Mun Park and Holiday Village**, the **Heritage Lodge at the Jao Tsung-I Academy**, and **Chun Yeung Estate in Fo Tan**, providing over 1,200 units. Three temporary accommodation facilities offered by the Government, including **Tso Kung Tam Outdoor Recreation Centre**, **Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre** and **Lady MacLehose Holiday Village** have also been made available for persons under compulsory quarantine who are unable to arrange accommodation.
 - **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.
 - From **March 9**, the CHP extended the **Enhanced Laboratory Surveillance Programme** to cover all private clinics and hospitals so that cases of COVID-19 can be identified early in order to minimise the risk of community transmission. A total of 64 General Out-patient Clinics and 17 Accident and Emergency Departments under the Hospital Authority are covered by the Programme.

Promoting "social distancing" to prevent the spread of COVID-19

- **Classes** at all Hong Kong schools are **suspended until end of the schools' Easter holidays, i.e. classes will resume on April 20 the earliest.**
- A "**work from home**" arrangement has been implemented **for Government employees since January 29. From March 2, the Government implemented targeted measures to reduce social contact**, such as flexible working hours and adopting a roster system to reduce the number of staff working in an office at any one time, **and infection control measures and gradually resume more public services in an orderly manner.**
- 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**, and liaising with relevant Mainland authorities to facilitate speedy clearance and delivery to 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 COVID-19.
- **Press conferences** are held by **senior officials** to announce major government decisions and anti-epidemic measures etc.
- The Government has launched [a dedicated website](#) with useful information and updates on latest developments.
- **Publicity campaigns** to disseminate personal hygiene messages through online and offline media are run in a number of **ethnic minority languages** apart from English and Chinese.
- [Tamar Talk Facebook page](#) has been launched to provide information and clarify rumours using simple and easy-to-understand text and data.