

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 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, on **February 19**, announced proposals for 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 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**.
- **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 February 20 the number was 16,649).

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** 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.).
- 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**.
- A number of locations have been identified as **quarantine centres, including three holiday camps, the Heritage Lodge of the Jao Tsung-I Academy** and the **Chun Yeung Estate in Fo Tan**, with a total of about 650 units. 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 COVID-19

- **Classes** at all Hong Kong schools are **suspended until March 16** 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 March 1** at the 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**, 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 webpage** with useful information and updates on latest developments.