

Virus Outbreak: New mask imprints to certify origin

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Taiwanese-made masks are pictured on March 30.

Photo: CNA

“Surgical” masks made in Taiwan must bear the imprints “MD” and “Made in Taiwan” by the end of this month, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) said yesterday, as it reported another imported case of COVID-19, a Taiwanese woman who returned from France.

To ensure that people can identify masks that have been produced domestically, the Ministry of Health and Welfare has asked local manufacturers to print “MD” — for “medical” — and “Made in Taiwan” on every flat mask they produce, starting in two weeks at the earliest, said Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Deputy Director-General Chuang Jen-hsiang (莊建人), the CECC’s spokesman.

The announcement comes amid concerns about the quality of masks imported from China

Reports last week said that New Taipei City-based Carry Hi-tech (奇異) had been bundling in non-medical-grade masks from China with the medical-grade ones for sale through the government’s mask rationing system.

After an investigation was launched into the company’s products, the government announced that masks imprinted with the words “Carry mask” bought through the rationing system could be exchanged for new ones before Friday.

Chuang said 1,875,872 “Carry mask” masks had been exchanged between Friday last week and Monday.

As for concerns about a CECC report on Sunday that the Customs Administration had seized

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more than 830,000 imported masks labeled as “Made in Taiwan,” Chuang said the agency yesterday confirmed that 842,505 falsely labeled masks had been seized between Aug. 10 and Saturday.

The recipients included 68 firms and 512 people, none of whom are members of the “national team” of companies that provide masks for the rationing system, he said.

He said the latest imported case of COVID-19 is a woman in her 20s who works in France and returned on Sunday.

She developed a headache and sore muscles on Aug. 30 and was diagnosed with the flu when she sought treatment in France, but her symptoms improved after taking medication, Chuang said.

Upon arrival in Taiwan, she told airport quarantine officers that she had a runny nose, so she was tested for COVID-19 and taken to a centralized quarantine facility, he added.

Her test results yesterday showed she was positive, making her the nation’s 495th confirmed case of COVID-19, and the 21 passengers who sat near her on her flight have been put under home isolation, he said.

Of the nation’s confirmed cases, 475 people have been released from isolation and seven have died.

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