

Mandatory PCR tests for four nations

Written by Taipei Times

Thursday, 10 December 2020 04:00 -



Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung briefs reporters at the Central Epidemic Command Center in Taipei yesterday on the COVID-19 situation.

Photo: CNA

Effective today, all categories of workers arriving from four countries would be required to take a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test for COVID-19 when ending their 14-day mandatory quarantine, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) said yesterday.

Current policy requires all foreign domestic workers to stay in centralized quarantine facilities after entering Taiwan, receive a mandatory test upon ending quarantine and perform self-health management for seven days, Chen said.

It also requires all migrant workers from Indonesia and the Philippines to go through the same procedures, but industrial workers from Thailand and Vietnam are not required to be tested after their mandatory 14-day home quarantine ends, he added.

However, that has changed, with Chen announcing that “industrial migrant workers from Thailand and Vietnam will also be required to take a PCR test when ending quarantine, and continue to practice self-health management afterward.”

The government will pay for the tests, but employers or recruitment agencies have to arrange and pay for the workers’ transportation to healthcare facilities.

Most migrant workers in Taiwan come from Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Thailand, according to Ministry of Labor data, so all migrant workers from these countries are to be subject to a mandatory PCR test when ending their quarantine.

In related news, a confirmed COVID-19 case reported last week — case No. 688, an

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Indonesian worker who tested positive after staying at a dormitory during her seven-day self-health management period — has revealed that many recruitment agencies have been outsourcing accommodation for migrant workers under self-health management to medical management companies.

The revelation has sparked concern, as the woman was found to have stayed with 47 other migrant workers in a single-space dormitory with only one shared bathroom during her self-health management period.

The facility was operated by a medical management company.

The ministry and local governments on Monday and Tuesday inspected all 21 medical management firms in Taiwan, Workforce Development Agency Deputy Director-General Tsai Meng-liang (蔡啟芳) said yesterday.

They found only 15 migrant workers accommodated by six medical management companies, nine of whom are staying in single bedrooms, and six in the same room, but with sufficient social distancing, he said.

The dormitories run by 11 of the companies meet the ministry's standards set in the Foreign Workers' Living Care Service Plan, but 10 of the companies have flaws, such as their dormitory being too small or failing to provide information on the protection of labor rights to the migrant workers.

The 10 companies have been temporarily banned from accommodating migrant workers until they correct the flaws and pass inspections, he said.

Employers and recruitment agencies are required to report the location where a migrant worker is to spend their self-health management period to the Entry and Departure of the Foreign Labor Airport Care Service Web site when they register quarantine data for arriving migrant workers.

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Migrant workers should be assigned to single rooms during self-health management or be given enough space to keep a social distance of at least 1.5m, and they should be required to wear a mask and frequently disinfect their hands if they stay together, he said.

Employers or recruitment agencies that fail to report the self-health management location or file a false report would be fined for contravening the Communicable Disease Control Act (傳染病防治法), Tsai added.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/12/10](#)