



Online food traders will be required to provide proper temperatures for delivery. Photo: Sam Tsang

Online food trade in Hong Kong set for new guidelines following food scandals

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Online food traders will be required to display licences on their websites and ensure the proper temperature during delivery, under new guidelines announced yesterday that are seen as a reaction to several food scandals this year.

Health secretary Dr Ko Wing-man told the Legislative Council the measures will come into force in the first quarter of next year.

For operators selling produce categorised as "restricted" without a physical premise, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department will require them to display their food licence or permit numbers, as well as a business address on all websites and publicity materials.

They will also be required to maintain proper storage temperature of food at all times during delivery. Chilled meat must be kept at 0 degrees Celsius or below, while sashimi must be kept between 0 and 4 degrees.

The same requirements will also apply to premises with food business licences that sell online.

While the measures will cover all licences issued from early next year onwards, they will also be applied to existing licences when they come up for renewal.

According to present legislation, anyone involved in preparation of food for sale must obtain a food factory licence.

As of mid-November, the Centre for Food Safety had taken over 1,300 food samples sold online for testing. All were found satisfactory.



Some Hong Kong people fell ill after eating sandwiches from popular Taiwanese brand Horng Ryen Jen.

Online food sales came into the spotlight earlier this year, after more than 80 people fell ill after eating Taiwanese Horng Ryen Jen sandwiches, some of which were ordered online.

Professor Terence Lau Lok-ting, a food safety expert from Polytechnic University, said the move offered greater protection to the public.

"Food companies might have no safety experts, just some traders who have a few ideas [on food safety]. It is good to see the government giving them guidelines," said Lau.

Suki Cheung, who runs 88 Food Express, said it is "not practical and possible" to have all food delivered in refrigerated vans. "How many refrigerated vans are there in Hong Kong?" she said. "The cost is three times higher than ordinary trucks."

Cheung said her company delivers high-risk food in trucks without refrigerating facilities but with more dry ice packs.

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