

MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

POW SING RESTAURANT AND POW SING KITCHEN SUSPENSION TO BE LIFTED TODAY AFTER MEETING REQUIRED STANDARDS

Singapore, 17 Aug 2016 – The National Environment Agency (NEA) will be lifting the suspension on Pow Sing Restaurant and Pow Sing Kitchen today as it is satisfied that the required measures have been implemented to rectify the lapses detected in order to resume operations. This comes after the conclusion of joint investigations by the Ministry of Health (MOH), NEA and Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) into the multiple food poisoning incidents that happened between 4 July 2016 and 16 July 2016, traced to the consumption of food prepared at both premises. To protect consumers from public health risks, NEA suspended the operating licence of Pow Sing Restaurant from 13 July 2016, and subsequently Pow Sing Kitchen from 16 July 2016.

Causes of outbreaks

2 To date, 88 cases were verified as linked to the two eateries (80 cases from Pow Sing Restaurant and 8 cases from Pow Sing Kitchen). Thirty sought outpatient treatment and the rest had self-medicated. No cases were hospitalised. Of 16 stool samples collected from cases linked to Pow Sing Restaurant, 13 had tested positive for pathogenic *E. coli*.

3 Our investigations showed that there were several hygiene lapses in the food preparation process leading to cross contamination of food at Pow Sing Restaurant and Pow Sing Kitchen. Food samples taken from Pow Sing Restaurant tested positive for high levels of bacteria such as *E.coli*, *Salmonella* and *Bacillus cereus*. One unregistered food handler was found preparing food. The restaurant had also failed to maintain temperature records of its refrigerators and freezers. At Pow Sing Kitchen, food samples tested positive for *E.coli* and *Bacillus cereus*. There was poor general housekeeping and cleanliness of the premises, and some chillers and freezers were faulty.

4 AVA has conducted upstream checks on the suppliers of food ingredients to Pow Sing and did not detect any food safety lapses.

5 NEA will be taking enforcement action against both licensees for the hygiene infringements found and contaminated food samples.

Measures taken by Pow Sing Restaurant and Pow Sing Kitchen

6 During the suspension period, the licensees had complied with the following measures stipulated by NEA:

- Disposed of all ready-to-eat food, thawed food and perishable food items
- Cleaned and sanitised the premises, including equipment, utensils, work surfaces and toilets

- Sent all food handlers to re-attend the Basic Food Hygiene course.

7 Both licensees have submitted their plans to ensure that good hygiene standards are observed during their food preparation. This includes keeping ready-to-eat food such as condiments in the chiller before serving, segregating the workflow for processing raw and ready-to-eat food to prevent cross-contamination, and ensuring that their staff practise good food and personal hygiene at all times. All food handlers have since re-attended and passed the Basic Food Hygiene training course, as instructed by NEA. They have also been screened and cleared by MOH to resume work.

Keeping close checks on the premises after reopening

8 Following the lifting of its suspension, NEA will place Pow Sing Restaurant and Pow Sing Kitchen under close surveillance to ensure that the licensees are putting into practice what they have submitted in their plans.

Public Advisory

9 We would like to remind the public that food poisoning can occur anywhere. Poor food preparation practices (e.g. using the same chopping board/knife for both raw and cooked food without washing between uses) and poor personal hygiene (e.g. not washing hands after using the toilet and before preparing food) can contribute to food poisoning even in the home.

10 For health related queries, members of the public can contact MOH at 1800-2254122. For feedback on any hygiene lapses, the public may contact NEA at the 24-hr hotline 1800-2255 632.