

Make prior work arrangements for rainstorms

The Labour Department (LD) today (April 27) reminded employers to make prior work arrangements for staff during and after rainstorms.

"To avoid disputes and confusion, employers should make prior work arrangements for staff and contingency measures during and after rainstorms," an LD spokesman said.

"In working out and enforcing the arrangements, employers should give prime consideration to employees' safety both in the workplace and during their journeys to and from work, and adopt a flexible approach. Whenever possible, they should consult their staff."

The work arrangements should cover the following matters:

- * Whether employees are required to report for duty when different rainstorm warnings are issued;
- * How wages and allowances will be calculated for staff who are required to report for duty, as well as those who are late for work or absent from work during rainstorms;
- * For employees who are required to travel to and from workplaces during rainstorms, whether transport facilities will be provided for them and, if so, the arrangements; and
- * The time for staff who have not reported for duty to resume work after a rainstorm warning is cancelled, and other relevant arrangements as well as contingency measures.

"Employers should make realistic assessments of the requirements for staff and require only absolutely essential staff to report for duty in adverse weather conditions. If an Amber, Red or Black Rainstorm Warning is issued during working hours, employees working indoors should remain on duty as usual and stay where they are unless it is dangerous to do so. Supervisors of employees working outdoors in exposed areas should suspend outdoor duties as soon as practicable. They should arrange for their employees to take shelter temporarily and resume duty when weather conditions permit. When the Black Rainstorm Warning is issued, those employees should not resume duty until the warning is lowered and weather conditions permit. If the Black Rainstorm Warning remains in force at the end of working hours, for safety reasons, employers should provide employees with an area in the workplace as temporary shelter for them to stay if they want to.

"If possible, employers should provide transport services for employees who are still required to travel to and from workplaces when the Black Rainstorm Warning is in force, or give them a special travelling allowance as encouragement.

"For staff who have practical difficulties in resuming work on time upon cancellation of a rainstorm warning, employers should give due consideration to the circumstances of individual employees and handle each case flexibly.

"As rainstorms are natural occurrences that cannot be avoided, employers should not deduct wages of employees who are absent from or late for work because of inclement weather. Neither should employers dismiss an employee summarily based on these grounds," he said.

The spokesman also reminded employers to observe the statutory liabilities and requirements under the Employment Ordinance, the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance.

Employers should not deduct the annual leave, statutory holidays or rest days employees are entitled to under the Employment Ordinance so as to compensate for the loss of working hours resulting from employees' failure to report for duty upon the announcement of a Black Rainstorm Warning. An employer who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with relevant provisions under the Employment Ordinance is liable to prosecution.

Employers should also note that they have an obligation to maintain a safe workplace for their employees under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance.

"If employees are required to work in times of rainstorms, employers should ensure that the risks at work are properly controlled and reduced to levels that are as low as reasonably practicable," the spokesman said.

Under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, employers are liable to pay compensation for deaths or injury incurred when employees are travelling by a direct route from their residence to their workplace, or from their workplace back to their residence after work, four hours before or after working hours on a day when Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above or a Red or Black Rainstorm Warning is in force.

To provide practical guidelines and samples of work arrangements for the reference of employers and employees, the LD has issued the booklet "Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms". The booklet can be obtained from branch offices of the Labour Relations Division or downloaded from the department's webpage (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf).

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Public urged to report flooding

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

Members of the public are advised to report any street flooding that comes to their notice to the Drainage Services Department by calling the 24-hour drainage hotline on 2300 1110.

World Book Day Fest: Folktaleoscope held today (with photos)

The "2019 World Book Day Fest – Towards a Reading City: Folktaleoscope", co-organised by the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) and the Education Bureau (EDB) at SKH Holy Trinity Church Secondary School, was well received today (April 27). About 2 500 school heads and teachers of primary schools and secondary schools as well as students and their parents participated in a series of activities promoting the benefits of reading.

Themed "Folktaleoscope", the Fest aimed at sustaining a reading culture in the city, nurturing students' interest in reading and encouraging them to develop a reading habit from a young age.

Highlights of the Fest included sharing of reading experiences by young people of different backgrounds, "Folktales Alfresco" at which secondary school students shared the joy of reading folktales through storytelling or drama performances, language game booths, a language orienteering challenge, a book exhibition, "Book Sharing", a pop-up library set up by the Hong Kong Public Library of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, as well as experience sharing sessions by schools, government and non-governmental organisations on the promotion of reading.

In his welcome speech at the opening ceremony, the Chairman of the SCOLAR, Mr Lester Huang, said that reading folktales and discovering the messages behind them was a good way to learn about other cultures and ways to communicate with people from different backgrounds. He added that reading extensively, which is a fun-filled journey, could broaden our perspectives and enrich our understanding of the world.

The Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, also shared his experience as a reader in his opening speech. He said that the EDB has been proactively promoting reading in secondary and primary schools as well as kindergartens through diverse and multi-pronged approaches, while joining with all stakeholders to promote a reading culture across the community and build Hong Kong into a reading city.

SCOLAR and the EDB will continue to collaborate with schools, parents and community partners to promote reading in and beyond schools, fostering a sustainable reading atmosphere and culture in the city.



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