

# The Observatory issued the first Red Rainstorm Warning Signal this year

Between spring and summer, the development of rainstorm over southern China can be somewhat random and often changes rapidly and is a great challenge for weather forecasting. In the past few days, the local weather has been unsettled with occasional heavy showers, which necessitated the issuance of rainstorm warning signals by the Observatory for three consecutive days.

At around 9am today (April 20), a band of thundery showers developed at around 200 kilometres to the northwest of Hong Kong (Figure 1). While moving southeastwards, it became more organised. At 11.45am, when the band of thundery showers moved to the vicinity of Guangzhou (Figure 2), the Observatory issued a Special Weather Tip reminding the public that the thundery showers might affect Hong Kong in the afternoon and advised them to pay attention to weather changes. Then at 12.45pm, the Observatory issued the Thunderstorm Warning to alert the public of the occurrence of squally thunderstorms. The Amber Rainstorm Warning Signal was issued at 1.40pm.

As showers became heavier, the Observatory issued the Red Rainstorm Warning Signal at 2.20pm, the first for this year. The band of thundery showers moved across Hong Kong rapidly. The Observatory issued the Amber Rainstorm Warning Signal at 3.20pm to replace the Red Rainstorm Warning Signal, and cancelled all rainstorm warning signals at 4.45pm.

During the rainstorm episode, more than 40 millimetres of rainfall were generally recorded over the territory. Showers were heavier over the western and northern parts of the New Territories and Lantau Island where rainfall exceeded 60 millimetres (Figure 3). Heavy showers were also accompanied by squalls. Gusts exceeding 100 kilometres per hour were recorded at Green Island and North Point.

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## Update on measles cases

The Centre for Health Protection of the Department of Health (DH) said today (April 20) that no additional case of measles infection has been recorded as at 4pm today.

Regarding measles control measures implemented at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), a total of four persons received measles vaccination at the airport vaccination station as at 6pm today, bringing the cumulative number of vaccinations given to 8 247.

From tomorrow (April 21) to April 28, the vaccination quota for the measles vaccination station at the airport remains at 500 doses daily. Vaccination for eligible airport staff will be provided to the following target groups who:

- (1) Were born in or after 1967, and have not received two doses of measles vaccination, and have not been infected with measles before, and with evidence of living with infants under 1 year old or living with pregnant women; or
- (2) Have laboratory evidence of testing not positive against measles antibody (IgG)

Details of evidence are as follows:

- (a) Supporting documents for living with infants under 1 year old: for example, birth certificate, discharge summary or vaccination card of the infant
- (b) Supporting documents for living with pregnant women: for example, positive pregnancy tests or antenatal follow-up cards of the pregnant women
- (c) Supporting documents for laboratory evidence: for example, blood results from the DH's measles serology test or any laboratory within the past 12 months

The venue and operation hours of the airport vaccination station are as follows:

Venue:	Multi-function Room, HKIA Tower (Level 5, Terminal 2)
Hours:	April 21 to 28 10am to 1pm 2pm to 6pm

As for the blood test service, the DH will continue to arrange the provision of a measles serology test service for airport staff to identify those who need the measles vaccination. A DH contractor will continue to provide the blood test service for about 200 airport staff who were born in or after 1967 daily from next Tuesday to Thursday (April 23 to 25). The blood test service will be suspended from Friday to Monday.

The venue and operation hours of the airport blood test station are as follows:

Venue:	South side before the Immigration Hall at Level 3 of Terminal 2 (non-restricted area)
Hours:	April 23 to 25 9am to 1pm

A hotline (2125 1122) has been set up for public enquiries and operates during office hours from Mondays to Fridays. A total of 3 223 enquiries have been received so far.

"The incubation period (the period from infection to appearance of illness) of measles ranges from seven days to 21 days. Symptoms of measles include fever, skin rash, cough, runny nose and red eyes. If symptoms arise, members of the public should wear surgical masks, stop going to work or school and avoid going to crowded places. They should also avoid contact with non-immune persons, especially persons with weakened immunity, pregnant women and children aged below 1. Those suspected to have been infected are advised to seek medical attention as early as possible and reveal relevant contact history of measles to healthcare professionals," the spokesman advised.

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## **DH responses on manpower problem of Medical and Health Officers**

In response to media enquiries on the Hong Kong Medical Association's proposal to exempt internship requirement for overseas medical specialists, a spokesman for the Department of Health (DH) today (April 20) provided the following reply:

According to the media reports, the DH has noted that representatives of some medical associations, in addressing the manpower shortage of the Medical and Health Officer grade, did not comprehend the specialist services and job nature of the DH as well as the severe manpower shortage faced by the Department. The DH will approach the relevant associations to provide accurate information for reference to facilitate a thorough deliberation.

In view of the severe manpower shortage problem in the DH's Medical and Health Officer grade in recent years, the Department has been striving to maintain communications with the relevant stakeholders, as well as providing information and participating in discussions to find solutions to address the recruitment difficulties. As at April 1, 2019, there are 521 posts under the Medical and Health Officer grade in the DH with 59 vacancies, spanning across different medical streams including child assessment, family medicine, forensic pathology, pathology, social hygiene, family health and health. With the creation of posts due to operational needs and wastage of officers, the number of vacancy of Medical and Health Officer grade is expected to increase to around 120 in the year 2019-20.

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# Suspected MERS cases reported

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health today (April 20) reported two suspected cases of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and again urged the public to pay special attention to safety during travel, taking due consideration of the health risks in the places they visit. The cases are detailed below:

Sex	Female	Female
Age	44	7
Affected area involved	Dubai, United Arab Emirates	Dubai, United Arab Emirates
High-risk exposure	Camel ride	Camel ride
Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital	Princess Margaret Hospital
Condition	Stable	Stable
MERS-Coronavirus preliminary test result	Negative	Negative

"Travellers to the Middle East should avoid going to farms, barns or markets with camels; avoid contact with sick persons and animals, especially camels, birds or poultry; and avoid unnecessary visits to healthcare facilities. We strongly advise travel agents organising tours to the Middle East to abstain from arranging camel rides and activities involving direct contact with camels, which are known risk factors for acquiring MERS Coronavirus (MERS-CoV)," a spokesman for the CHP said.

Locally, the CHP's surveillance with public and private hospitals, with practising doctors and at boundary control points is firmly in place. Inbound travellers and members of the public who recently visited the Middle East and developed fever or lower respiratory symptoms within 14 days will be classified as suspected MERS cases. They will be taken to public hospitals for isolation and management until their specimens test negative for MERS-CoV.

Travellers to affected areas should maintain vigilance, adopt appropriate health precautions and take heed of personal, food and environmental hygiene. The public may visit the MERS pages of the [CHP](#) and its [Travel Health Service](#), MERS statistics in [affected areas](#), the CHP's [Facebook Page](#) and [YouTube Channel](#), and the World Health Organization's [latest news](#) for more information and health advice. Tour leaders and tour guides operating overseas tours are advised to refer to the CHP's [health advice on MERS](#).

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## Work arrangements for and after rainstorm warnings (2)

The Labour Department (LD) today (April 20) reminded employers to make practical and reasonable work arrangements for staff in times of rainstorms. Employers should also make flexible arrangements for staff to resume work after a rainstorm warning is cancelled, with due consideration to road, traffic and other conditions. This will help maintain good labour-management relations, and ensure the safety of employees and the smooth operation of the organisations.

"When a Black Rainstorm Warning is issued during working hours, employees working indoors should continue their work unless it is dangerous to do so. Supervisors may exercise their discretion to adjust the time for reporting for duty and releasing staff based on their personal circumstances. Supervisors of employees working outdoors in exposed areas should arrange for the employees to stop work and take shelter immediately," an LD spokesman said.

"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 or allowances 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.

Under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, employers are liable to pay compensation for death 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](http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf)).