

Assess the risk of heat stroke to employees

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force:

The Labour Department reminds employers that as the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force, they should assess the risk of heat stroke to their employees and adopt effective preventive measures such as providing cool drinking water, setting up temporary sunshade, providing mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion of employees and providing for employees as far as practicable covered space with good ventilation for rest and meals. Employees should drink water regularly and be mindful of their physical condition. If early heat stroke symptoms such as headache and thirst appear, they should rest in a cool or shady place and drink water immediately. They should also inform their supervisors to take appropriate action.

CHP reminds public on precautions against heat stroke during very hot weather

The Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH) today (Aug 24) reminded members of the public, particularly those undertaking outdoor activities, to take heed of necessary measures against heat stroke and sunburn in very hot weather.

"The public should carry and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration while engaging in outdoor activities," a spokesman for the CHP said.

"Those engaged in strenuous outdoor activities should avoid beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee and tea, as well as alcohol, as they speed up water loss through the urinary system," the spokesman explained.

"The obese, the sick, including those with heart disease or high blood pressure, the old and the young are more vulnerable to heat-related illnesses. They should pay special attention," the spokesman added.

The public should adopt the following precautions:

- Wear loose and light-coloured clothing to reduce heat absorption and facilitate sweat evaporation and heat dissipation;
- Avoid vigorous exercise and prolonged activities like hiking or trekking as heat, sweating and exhaustion can place additional demands on the physique;
- Perform outdoor activities in the morning or late afternoon;
- For indoor activities, open all windows, use a fan or use air-conditioning to maintain good ventilation; and
- Reschedule work to cooler times of the day.

If working in a hot environment is inevitable, introduce shade in the workplace where practicable. Start work slowly and pick up the pace gradually. Move to a cool area for rest at regular intervals to allow the body to recuperate.

The public should also note the latest and the forecast Ultraviolet (UV) Index released by the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO). When the UV Index is high (6 or above):

- Minimise direct exposure of the skin and the eyes to sunlight;
- Wear long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothes;
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or use an umbrella;
- Seek a shaded area or put on UV-blocking sunglasses;
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen lotion with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or above. Apply liberally and reapply after swimming, sweating or toweling off; and
- While using DEET-containing insect repellents for personal protection against mosquito-borne diseases, apply sunscreen first, then insect repellent.

If symptoms develop, such as dizziness, headache, nausea, shortness of breath or confusion, rest and seek help immediately, and seek medical advice as soon as possible.

The public may obtain more information from the DH's Health Education Infoline (2833 0111), [heat stroke](#) page and [UV radiation](#) page; the HKO's Dial-a-Weather (1878 200), latest [weather and forecast](#), [UV Index](#) and weather information for [hiking and mountaineering](#); and [press releases](#) of the Labour Department on precautions against heat stroke for outdoor workers and their employers when the Very Hot Weather Warning is in force.

Very Hot Weather Warning issued

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

The Hong Kong Observatory has issued the Very Hot Weather Warning.

To prevent heat stroke, avoid prolonged activities outdoors.

If engaged in outdoor work or activities, wear a wide-brimmed hat and light-coloured, loose-fitting clothes. Stay in shaded areas as much as possible.

Drink plenty of water, and avoid beverages containing caffeine or alcohol.

If you feel sick, consult a doctor right away.

Government responds to media enquiries on Employment Support Scheme

The Government spokesman responded today (August 23) to media enquiries in respect of the Employment Support Scheme (ESS):

Just as those applying for the first tranche of the ESS, employers applying for the second tranche of the ESS can choose any one month from December 2019 to March 2020 as "specified month". The amount of wage subsidies will be calculated based on 50 per cent of the actual wages paid to each employee in the "specified month", with a wage cap at \$18,000 per month. The maximum wage subsidy per employee is \$9,000 per month. The amount of wages paid in "specified month" and the information on MPF contributions only serves as the basis for calculating the wage subsidies instead of the maximum subsidies that the employers can use for paying wages for each employee. We have retained some flexibility when designing the ESS, including that employers are not required to maintain the original salary level (e.g. in "specified month") of individual employees. Otherwise, some employers, especially those in industries hard hit by the epidemic, may choose to close down.

Moreover, all employers applying for the second tranche of wage subsidies have to make the same undertakings as those applying for the first tranche did: (i) during the subsidy period (September to November), all the wage subsidies received must be used for paying employees' wages in the same month. In other words, the subsidy cannot be used for other purposes or used for paying wages in other months. Otherwise, the concerned employers have to return the subsidies received in full or in part; and (ii) the number of paid employees in any one month during the subsidy period (September to November) should not be less than the total number of employees in March 2020 (regardless of whether they were paid or not) ("committed headcount of paid

employees"). Otherwise, employers have to pay a penalty to the Government. If employees are on (or are required to take) no-pay leave for a whole month during the subsidy period, they are not regarded as paid employees, so they are not counted towards "committed headcount of paid employees".

In order to strengthen the deterrence against employers significantly laying off their employees and having no intention to rehire employees to fill the vacancies, we have added a new penalty clause in the second tranche of the ESS. If the ESS Secretariat considers that the magnitude of redundancies made by the employers during the subsidy period (i.e. from September to November 2020) was substantial, and the employers fail to prove their intention to hire new employees to replace those being laid off and/or re-employ those who have been laid off, or there are no reasonable explanations provided for the redundancies made, the Government reserves the right to claw back the second tranche of wage subsidies disbursed to the employers (in full or in part).

Moreover, if employers receiving the first tranche of wage subsidies made redundancies in their respective companies/organisations during the subsidy period (i.e. from June to August 2020) and the ESS Secretariat considers that the magnitude of redundancies was substantial, and the employers fail to prove their intention to hire new employees to replace those being laid off and/or re-employ those who have been laid off, or there are no reasonable explanations provided for the redundancies made, the Government reserves the right to reject the concerned employers' applications for the second tranche of wage subsidies.

The spokesman said, "The ESS Secretariat will examine whether the employers complied with the promises in the first tranche and determine if it is necessary to exercise to the above power".

Applications for the second tranche of the ESS will be accepted from 7am on August 31 to 11.59pm on September 13. Eligible employers, regardless of whether they applied for the first tranche, can submit their applications through the ESS website (www.ess.gov.hk) during the said period. Self-employed persons (SEPs) with MPF "self-employed person" accounts as of March 31 can also submit applications during the same period if they have not received the subsidy in the first tranche of the ESS.

In addition, the ESS Secretariat has notified a further batch of successful applicants that disbursement of wage subsidies will commence next week. About 400 employers and about 900 SEPs were involved. The total wage subsidies amount to about \$100 million. To date, the wage subsidies disbursed in the first tranche amount to about \$44 billion, covering around 149 000 employers with a total committed paid headcount of about 1.9 million.

Clerical Assistant of CEDB preliminarily tested positive for COVID-19

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (CEDB) today (August 23) learnt that a Clerical Assistant was tested preliminarily positive for coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The Clerical Assistant is mainly responsible for providing supporting services on the 23rd floor of the West Wing of the Central Government Offices in Tamar. He does not have contact with members of the public in his daily work. He last performed duties on August 20.

The Clerical Assistant has no recent travel history. He has been wearing masks when performing duties. His body temperature is normal and he has followed relevant disease prevention measures at work.

CEDB is making arrangements to clean and sterilise the concerned working places thoroughly and for colleagues working closely with the officer to undergo COVID-19 testing.

CEDB will continue to maintain close liaison with the Centre for Health Protection. It has also reminded its staff to pay attention to personal hygiene and stay vigilant, and if feeling unwell, to seek medical advice and inform the bureau as soon as possible.