

Government urges employers to show understanding and flexibility in work arrangements of employees due to traffic conditions

The Government today (November 22) urged employers to make flexible work arrangements for staff to return to work having regard to traffic and road conditions occurring during the day. This will help maintain good labour-management relations and ensure the safety of employees and the smooth operations of establishments.

"For staff who cannot report for duty on time on account of conditions in road traffic or public transport services, employers should give due consideration to the circumstances of individual employees and handle each case flexibly," a Government spokesman said.

"The Government will similarly handle government employees in such situations with understanding. For staff who are unable to report to work on time because of traffic problems, they should inform their immediate supervisors as soon as possible and their departments will handle the cases flexibly."

Red fire danger warning

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

The fire danger situation today (November 22) is red and fire risk is extreme. The countryside is extremely vulnerable to fire. If you are planning to spend the day in the countryside, please take pre-cooked food for a picnic and take all measures to prevent hill fires. The penalty for lighting fires illegally in the countryside is \$25,000 and a year's imprisonment.

SWD urges public not to take

children/family members to care centres today

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following special announcement immediately, and repeat it at frequent intervals:

"The Social Welfare Department announces that as there are still uncertain factors affecting the roads and traffic conditions, members of the public are advised not to take their children or family members to child care centres, centres providing after school care programmes, elderly services centres or day rehabilitation units including sheltered workshops, integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres and day activity centres today (November 22). These centres will, however, remain open during their normal operating hours to serve those whose families cannot provide alternative care for them. Members of the public who have the need for the services mentioned may contact the service units concerned in advance."

TD appeals to public to pay attention to latest traffic situation

The Transport Department (TD) today (November 22) appealed to members of the public to pay attention to the traffic situation and the latest public transport service arrangement this morning before starting their journey.

As at 6am today, the latest public transport situation is as follows:

(I) MTR

All MTR lines maintain services today. Except the Airport Express Line, the train service will end at 11pm.

Hung Hom and University stations are closed. Entrances/Exits at some stations will also be closed. Train services may be suspended or adjusted due to incidents. Members of the public are advised to continue to stay tuned to the latest traffic news.

From start of service, East Rail Line service will be provided between Mong Kok East and Lo Wu/Lok Ma Chau stations (not stopping at University Station). West Rail Line service will end at East Tsim Sha Tsui Station. Free shuttle bus service running between Tai Po Market and Kam Sheung Road stations will be arranged during morning and evening peak periods.

Light Rail Route 751P is substituted by Route 706. Routes 614, 614P, 751 and 761P will be diverted. Route 751 will not stop at Chestwood and Yau Oi stops.

(II) Hung Hom Cross Harbour Tunnel

Due to the damage to the facilities of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel (CHT), the tunnel cannot be reopened within a short period of time. To assist members of the public to commute, the TD has co-ordinated with franchised bus and ferry operators to strengthen services. Nine routes operating via the CHT have been rerouted to the Eastern Harbour Crossing (EHC) or the Western Harbour Tunnel (WHC). The routes via the EHC include 101X, 107, 108, 111, 115, 116, 118 and 182 while the route via the WHC includes 118P.

The service hours of the following two special free ferry routes are from 7am to 7pm:

(1) Between Ma Tau Kok Public Pier in Kowloon City and Wan Chai Public Pier (near Golden Bauhinia Square): with a headway of 20 minutes during peak hours

(2) Between Hung Hom (South) Ferry Pier and Wan Chai Public Pier (near Golden Bauhinia Square): with a headway of 30 minutes during peak hours

In view of the limited carrying capacity of the ferry services and to provide alternative for passengers, franchised bus operators will arrange special departures (Route 115) at Kowloon City Ferry Pier Bus Terminus via the EHC to Central.

(III) Affected road sections

A number of roads in Tsim Sha Tsui District are yet to be reopened. Some bus routes may be temporarily diverted or suspended. The affected road sections include the junction of Chatham Road South, Cheong Wan Road and Austin Road, Austin Road between Cox's Road and Chatham Road South and Hong Chong Road (both bounds). Police will implement road closure, traffic control and diversion measures depending on the traffic conditions on site.

As traffic conditions and railway services may change within a short period of time, the TD urges commuters using public transport services to allow more travelling time and plan their journey in advance. Details of the latest traffic news are available at TD's website (www.td.gov.hk/en/home/index.html) or mobile application "HKeMobility".

FHB's response to impact of tear gas

on health and food safety

The Food and Health Bureau (FHB) made the following response today (November 21) regarding the recent public concerns about the impact of tear gas on health and food safety:

The Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, said, "I fully understand the public's concern on the impact of tear gas on health and food safety. In this connection, the FHB has earlier sought advice from relevant experts. Subsequently, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) under the Department of Health (DH) and the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department have respectively provided health information on tear gas and advice on contaminants and food safety."

On the health effects of tear gas, in general, post-exposure symptoms to tear gas may include stinging and burning sensation to eyes and other mucous membranes, tearing, salivation, runny nose, tight chest, headache, nausea, burning sensation of skin, and erythema of skin. These symptoms will usually disappear within a short time after exposure to tear gas. According to the Hospital Authority (HA), amongst those who were exposed to tear gas and attended the accident and emergency (A&E) departments of HA, they generally experienced mild respiratory and skin irritation, and there was no serious health impact reported. Most of them could be immediately discharged after rinsing and receiving treatment at the A&E departments.

Some members of the public enquired how the residual materials could be removed. Advices from the DH include: disposable cleaning items are preferable. Suitable personal protective equipment such as masks, rubber gloves and rubber aprons should be worn. In general, surface with residual materials could be wiped by cloth soaked with soapy water but hot water should not be used in order to avoid evaporating the materials. Also, residual materials should not be stirred up and therefore tools such as high pressure water jet and brooms, as well as electric fans, should not be used. The disposable cleaning items should be properly packed (such as in a sealed plastic bag) after cleaning and then disposed.

Details in the cleaning of residual materials are available in the health information prepared by the CHP (www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/102308.html).

On food safety, the CFS has earlier on offered advice to the public on contaminants and food safety. CFS's advice is available on its website. (www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/whatsnew_fstr/files/Advice_on_tear_gas_for%20public_e.pdf)

In addition, the CFS has provided advice to the food trade on how to minimise food contamination by contaminants, including chemical substances of tear gas. The CFS advises the trade that food should be properly stored in suitable places such as clean and covered food-grade containers to reduce the risk of food contamination.

"I know the public would like to learn more about the situation at the Yau Ma Tei Fruit Market. The CFS staff have visited the market to provide food safety information to traders and advised them to take appropriate preventive measures. Insofar as the general public is concerned, generally speaking, contaminants on the surface of some kinds of food, such as fruits or vegetables, can be reduced by washing with running water. For the sake of prudence, food suspected to be contaminated or showing abnormality should not be consumed."

"The FHB will continue to exchange views with relevant experts and to provide in a timely manner up-to-date information and advice to the public from the public health perspective," stressed Professor Chan.