

# Employers and employees should make prior work arrangements in times of adverse weather and extreme conditions

The Labour Department (LD) today (March 18) reminded employers to make prior work arrangements for employees during and after tropical cyclone warnings, rainstorm warnings, extreme conditions and other adverse weather events as early as possible to ensure the safety of employees and smooth operation of establishments as well as to maintain good labour-management relations.

"Employers should make prior work arrangements and contingency measures for staff which are reasonable and practicable. In drawing up and implementing the work arrangements, employers should give prime consideration to employees' safety and the feasibility of employees travelling to and from their workplaces. Employers should also give consideration as much as possible to the different situations faced by individual employees, such as their place of residence and the road and traffic conditions in the vicinity, and adopt a sympathetic and flexible approach with regard to their actual difficulties and needs," an LD spokesman said.

To avoid misunderstandings, disputes and confusion, employers should consult and engage employees when drawing up the arrangements and make appropriate updates or amendments based on the experience of each occasion and the needs of both employers and employees as well as the actual situations. The work arrangements should cover the following matters:

- \* arrangements in respect of reporting for duty;
- \* arrangements in respect of early release from work;
- \* arrangements in respect of resumption of work (e.g. the number of hours within which employees should resume duty after the warning concerned is cancelled or the extreme conditions come to an end, when safety and traffic conditions allow);
- \* arrangements in respect of remote work such as work from home (if applicable) (e.g. duty and work arrangements during and after tropical cyclone warnings, rainstorm warnings or extreme conditions);
- \* arrangements regarding working hours, wages and allowances (e.g. calculation of wages and allowances in respect of reporting for duty and absence); and
- \* special arrangements in respect of staff required to report for duty in times of adverse weather and extreme conditions.

"Employers should conduct a timely and realistic assessment of whether there is any need for requiring staff to report for duty at workplaces when a tropical cyclone warning, rainstorm warning or extreme conditions are in force. In making the assessment, employers should take into account the safety of employees, the business nature, operational needs and urgency of

service, with due regard to the manpower requirements, staffing establishment and individual situations of employees, and keep the number of staff at workplaces to the minimum as far as possible," the spokesman added.

When a Pre-No. 8 Special Announcement is issued during working hours, within two hours before the Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 is expected to take effect, employers should release employees from the workplaces or from work in stages, or arrange for them to work remotely according to the agreed work arrangements. To ensure the safety of employees and to enable them to arrive home before suspension of public transport services, employees who have mobility problems (for example, pregnant employees or those with a disability), employees who rely on transport services which are prone to being affected by adverse weather conditions (for example, ferry services) to get home, and those who work in or are living in remote areas (for example, outlying islands) should be given priority to leave. Other employees should be released from workplaces or from work in stages according to their travelling distance or the time required for returning home.

If an Amber, Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued during working hours, employees working indoors should continue to work as usual unless it is dangerous to do so. Supervisors of employees working outdoors or in exposed areas should suspend outdoor duties as soon as practicable. They should arrange for their employees to take shelter temporarily and resume duty only when weather conditions permit. If the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is still in force by the end of working hours, employees should stay in a safe place until the heavy rain has passed. A suitable area in the workplace should be made available by employers as temporary shelter for employees.

If the Government makes an extreme conditions announcement, apart from those required by employers to report for duty at workplaces, employees are advised to stay in the place they are currently in or in safe places when extreme conditions are in force, instead of heading for work. Employees who have already reported for duty at workplaces could continue to work as usual in a safe manner. If the workplaces are in danger, employers should release staff from work early under feasible conditions and in a safe manner, or make available a safe place as a temporary shelter for employees. If the working time ends while extreme conditions are still in force, employers can release employees from workplaces in a safe manner or provide a suitable area as temporary shelter for those still at workplaces.

If it is necessary for employees to report for duty at workplaces under adverse weather or extreme conditions, employers should discuss and agree with them in advance on the duty arrangements and contingency measures. If public transport services are suspended or limited during Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 (T8) or higher, the Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or extreme conditions are in force, employers should provide safe transport services for employees travelling to and from workplaces, or grant them an extra travelling allowance.

The spokesman reminded employers to observe the statutory liabilities

and requirements under the Employment Ordinance, Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, Employees' Compensation Ordinance and Minimum Wage Ordinance.

"As natural calamities cannot be avoided, for employees who are not able to report for duty or resume work on time due to adverse weather or extreme conditions, employers should neither deduct their wages, good attendance bonuses or allowances, nor reduce employees' entitlement to annual leave, statutory holidays or rest days under the Employment Ordinance, or ask for additional hours of work from employees to compensate for the loss of working hours when they are unable to report for duty," he said.

Employers should note that they have an obligation to provide and maintain a safe working environment for their employees under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance. If employees are required to work in times of tropical cyclone warnings, rainstorm warnings or extreme conditions, employers should ensure that the risks at work are reduced as far as reasonably practicable. Moreover, under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, employers are liable to pay compensation for injuries or deaths 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 Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or higher, a Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal or extreme conditions are in force.

The LD has published the "Code of Practice in Times of Adverse Weather and 'Extreme Conditions'", which provides the major principles, reference guidelines and information on relevant legislation on making work arrangements for the reference of employers and employees. 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)).

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## Remarks by CE at media session before ExCo (with video)

Following are the remarks by the Chief Executive, Mr John Lee, at a media session before the Executive Council meeting today (March 18):

Reporter: Good morning, Mr Lee. Firstly, about the controversies surrounding the deal by CK Hutchison Holdings to sell the ports that it owns. Firstly, what is the Government's view on the deal itself, and how should the company respond amid this apparent criticism by Beijing? Secondly, you mentioned earlier that any deal made in Hong Kong must adhere to the local laws and legislations. Should you elaborate a little bit on what you mean by that? You

know, perhaps, would the Government consider using its own legislation, like National Security Law or potentially something else? And secondly, about the raising of the Hong Kong public hospital fees; when raising the fees of certain medical services provided by the Government, how can the Government itself ensure that residents in need would not have their diagnosis delayed due to these extra charges? And how would you address concerns that private hospitals might also raise their prices in light of this? Thank you.

Chief Executive: In regard to the transaction you mentioned, I have three points to make. First, there have been extensive discussions in society about the issue and this reflects society's concern over the matter. These concerns deserve serious attention. Second, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government urges foreign governments to provide a fair and just environment for enterprises, including enterprises from Hong Kong. We oppose the abusive use of coercion or bullying tactics in international, economic and trade relations. Third, any transaction must comply with the legal and regulatory requirements. Hong Kong will handle it in accordance with the law and regulations.

In regard to your question about reviews of charges and fees of hospitals, I must first emphasise this review is part of the healthcare reform. I have given three principles to the Health Bureau in this healthcare reform in relation to review of fees and charges. First, it is not an expenditure cutting exercise. We shall spend no less money. Just to readjust the spending distribution for the sake of efficiency and effectiveness. Second, priority should be given to the most needy. These include helping those with economic difficulties and those cases in which the patient suffers from an emergency, or the most serious and critical illnesses. Third, reduce waste of resources, including drugs and services waste. I have urged the Health Bureau to finalise the review and announce the details as soon as possible, and we aim at announcing the details within this month.

Reporter: Sorry, do you have anything to say about the legal aspects of the CK Hutchison deal? Thank you.

Chief Executive: We will deal with it in accordance with the law and regulations.

(Please also refer to the Chinese portion of the remarks.)

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## Government launches Immigration Facilitation Scheme for Invited

# Persons

The Government has launched today (March 18) the Immigration Facilitation Scheme for Invited Persons to provide more convenient immigration arrangements for invited persons from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, in order to promote economic and trade exchanges and cultural co-operation between Hong Kong and ASEAN.

Currently, frequent travellers to Hong Kong can apply for self-service immigration clearance. Among the 10 ASEAN countries, visitors from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam need a visa for visiting Hong Kong. Under the Scheme, relevant policy bureaux/departments will actively invite ASEAN nationals who are able to make considerable contributions to Hong Kong's economic development or who have been invited to attend important events in Hong Kong to enjoy the facilitation. The Immigration Department (ImmD) will provide one-stop processing of relevant applications from invited persons through an electronic platform, relax the application criteria for self-service immigration clearance and simplify the information required for visa applications.

A Government spokesman said, "ASEAN and Hong Kong have a long-standing relationship, and it is Hong Kong's second largest trading partner. We attach great importance to the co-operation with ASEAN countries. Under the Scheme, invited persons can enjoy self-service immigration clearance services at the control points of Hong Kong, greatly enhancing clearance efficiency and experience. Through the Scheme, we would like to actively provide more facilitation for ASEAN's business leaders and those in other fields to visit Hong Kong, so as to promote multifaceted exchanges and create mutual benefits and win-win outcomes."

While upholding effective immigration control, the Government is committed to actively attracting talent from all over the world to Hong Kong and facilitating business. In recent years, the Government has announced a series of ASEAN-specific visa facilitation measures. Following the relaxation of the criteria for Vietnamese for multiple-entry visas for travel and business announced in 2023, the 2024 Policy Address also relaxed the criteria for nationals of Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar applying for multiple-entry visas and extended the validity period of the multiple-entry visas from two years to three years. To provide facilitation to group visitors from these ASEAN countries, the ImmD has also introduced a fast-track arrangement for visit visa applications submitted via local travel agents.

The Immigration Facilitation Scheme for Invited Persons will help enhance Hong Kong's image and status in ASEAN and further deepen the ties between Hong Kong and ASEAN. For details of the Scheme, please visit website of the ImmD ([www.immd.gov.hk/eng/invitedpersons.html](http://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/invitedpersons.html)).

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## Postal services to United States return to normal

Hongkong Post announced today (March 18) that, as advised by the postal administration of the United States, mail delivery services to areas with postcodes 90001-95399 and 99556-99780 previously impacted by severe weather and wildfires have returned to normal.

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## FEHD Sunlight Market stalls for rent on March 25, April 1 and 8

The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) announced today (March 18) that eight vacant stalls at the FEHD Sunlight Market will be available to the public for renting on March 25, April 1 and 8 on a first-come, first-served basis.

The retail commodities allowed for sale in these stalls cover vegetables, fruits, other food-related wet goods and non-food related dry goods. The licence agreement is a 10-month fixed term starting from May 1, with no right of renewal upon expiry. The licence fee of the stalls varies depending on their sizes. Relevant information is available on the FEHD website.

Members of the public who are interested in renting a market stall should approach the Islands District Environmental Hygiene Office, Room 626, 6/F, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central (Tel: 2852 3606), to apply in person from 9.30am to 12.30pm or 2.30pm to 4.30pm during the abovementioned renting period.

A spokesman for the FEHD said, "Applicants for the market stalls must be at least 18 years old and ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. To allow more people to select stalls and increase customer choices by enhancing the diversity in terms of the variety of stalls, a stall licensee can only rent one stall in the FEHD Sunlight Market. The terms and conditions of renting market stalls on a first-come, first-served basis have been uploaded to the FEHD website, detailing the qualifications of the applicants."

Details of renting market stalls in the FEHD Sunlight Market on a first-come, first-served basis have been uploaded to the FEHD website ([www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant\\_environment/tidy\\_market/FCFS/202503\\_sunlight.html](http://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/FCFS/202503_sunlight.html)). Interested applicants may visit the department website or contact the Island District Environmental Hygiene Office.