

Employers and employees should make prior work arrangements in times of tropical cyclones and rainstorms

As the Strong Wind Signal No. 3 (T3) is now in force, the Labour Department (LD) today (June 14) reminded employers to make prior work arrangements for employees during and after tropical cyclone warnings, rainstorm warnings and extreme conditions, including arrangements on reporting for duty, release from work, resumption of work and remote work (if applicable). These arrangements not only can ensure the safety of employees and smooth operation of establishments, but also are conducive to maintaining good labour-management relations.

"In drawing up and implementing the work arrangements and contingency measures for periods during and after tropical cyclone warnings and rainstorm warnings, 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 due 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 when the extreme conditions come to an end, and 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 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 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 when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 (T8) or higher, 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 also 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 there is a T8 signal 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).

"ICH Infinityâž" Fun Day temporarily suspended

As the Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 will be issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, the "ICH Infinityâž" Fun Day held at the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre (at Sam Tung Uk Museum, Tsuen Wan) today (June 14) will be temporarily suspended in the afternoon. Members of the public are advised not to visit.

Depending on the weather condition, the "ICH Infinityâž" Fun Day may re-open where circumstances permit. Please pay attention to the relevant news announcement.

Another trial project on hydrogen fuel technology given agreement-in-

principle by Inter-departmental Working Group on Using Hydrogen as Fuel

A spokesman for the Environment and Ecology Bureau (EEB) said that the Inter-departmental Working Group on Using Hydrogen as Fuel (Working Group) has given agreement-in-principle to another application of a trial project on hydrogen fuel technology yesterday (June 13).

The said project concerns an application jointly submitted by the Hong Kong and China Gas Company Limited and Chi Shing New Energy Technology Co., Limited, involving provision of electricity with hydrogen power generation equipment to support the operation of electrical equipment at a recreation facility of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department at Fan Kam Road, Fanling, for the golf event of the 15th National Games to be held in November.

The spokesperson of the EEB stated, "The Working Group has promptly initiated the examination process upon receipt of detailed information of the trial project. After seeking members' agreement through circulation, the Working Group has given agreement-in-principle to the application on June 13."

To date, the Working Group has given agreement-in-principle in stages to a total of 27 applications of hydrogen energy trial projects. The Working Group will continue to make reference to the operational data and experience collected from the trials to provide advice for the continuous enhancement of the safety and technical guidelines on the local application of hydrogen energy. Details are set out in the thematic webpage (cnsd.gov.hk/en/inter-departmental-working-group-on-using-hydrogen-as-fuel/).

The Working Group is formed by the EEB, the Transport and Logistics Bureau, the Development Bureau, the Security Bureau, the Environmental Protection Department, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, the Fire Services Department, the Transport Department, the Marine Department, the Planning Department, the Lands Department, the Buildings Department, the Architectural Services Department and the Labour Department.

Lifesaving services suspended at Hap

Mun Bay Beach

Attention TV/Radio announcers:

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

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (June 14) that as lifeguards are unable to go to Hap Mun Bay Beach in Sai Kung District by ferries due to rough sea conditions, lifesaving services at the beach has been suspended. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at this beach until further notice.

Red flags hoisted at several beaches

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (June 14) that due to big waves, red flags have been hoisted at Deep Water Bay Beach, Stanley Main Beach, Shek O Beach and Big Wave Bay Beach in Southern District, Hong Kong Island; Hung Shing Yeh Beach, Cheung Chau Tung Wan Beach, Silver Mine Bay Beach and Pui O Beach in Islands District; and Hap Mun Bay Beach and Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beachgoers are advised not to swim at these beaches.