

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 5/2016

**Tropical Cyclones and Heavy Persistent Rain
Arrangements for Evening Schools**

[Note: This circular should be read by -

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all **evening** schools - for action
- (b) Heads of all sections - for information]

SUMMARY

The purpose of this circular is to inform evening schools of the arrangements to be implemented under inclement weather conditions. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 7/2015 dated 18 May 2015 on the same subject.

DETAILS

2. The content of this circular relates to the safety of students and school staff. All schools are required to comply with all the arrangements and act accordingly.
3. These arrangements apply in the event of:
 - (a) tropical cyclones and heavy persistent rain; and
 - (b) change of weather conditions at the time of public examinations.
4. Special attention is drawn to the different arrangements in the event of tropical cyclones and heavy persistent rain. It takes time for tropical cyclones to form and change and the effects are more lasting. Upon EDB's announcement of class suspension in case of tropical cyclones, schools should arrange students to return home under safe conditions. For heavy persistent rain, however, adverse situation could develop quickly and dissipate quickly. Schools should therefore continue their lessons as usual when RED/BLACK Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued during lesson time and should not

arrange students to return home immediately. (Please refer to paragraphs 6 and 8 below for details of the arrangements.)

Tropical Cyclones

5. Schools should pay attention to the announcements made via the radio, television or mobile application “GovHK Notifications” when tropical cyclones are affecting Hong Kong. For full details of the announcements, schools may visit the webpage “Press Releases” on the Government website (<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/today.htm>).

6. When tropical cyclones affect Hong Kong, the following general arrangements will apply and EDB will make appropriate public announcements accordingly¹:

| Weather conditions | Corresponding measures |
|--|---|
| When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 1 is issued | ✧ All schools are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise. |
| When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is issued | ✧ All schools are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise. |
| When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 or above is issued* | ✧ Classes of all schools are to be suspended. |
| When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is replaced by Signal No. 3 | ✧ Unless previous announcement has been made to the effect that classes will be suspended for that evening, evening schools are to resume if Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal below No. 8 has been issued before 5:00 p.m. |

* If students have already set out for school when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 is issued, schools should activate the contingency plan to ensure that school premises will be open and arrange staff to look after the students who have arrived at school, until proper arrangements are made for such students to return home at an appropriate time under safe condition².

¹ Schools may visit the EDB website (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/>) for full details of the announcements. According to section 85A of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279), schools may conduct educational courses or give instructions on a general holiday. In this connection, EDB will make public announcements during holidays where appropriate.

² The Permanent Secretary for Education or his delegated authority will give a written permission under section 83(6)(a)(ii) of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) to those school staff and students who need to enter or remain in their school premises during the period of suspension due to operational need or safety reason. The issue of the written permission will be announced in the EDB website together with the public announcement of class suspension.

Heavy Persistent Rain

7. The rainstorm warning system of the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO) is designed to alert the public to the occurrence of heavy rain and the likelihood of major disruptions, including serious traffic disruptions, as well as extensive floods and landslips resulting in casualties. Schools should pay particular attention to the announcements made via the radio, television or mobile application “GovHK Notifications” during rainstorms. For more detailed information regarding rainfall distribution, schools may visit the following HKO webpage:

<http://www.hko.gov.hk/wxinfo/rainfall/isohyete.shtml>

8. In the event of rainstorms, the following general arrangements will apply and EDB will make appropriate public announcements accordingly:

| Rainstorm Warning Signal | Corresponding measures |
|---|--|
| AMBER | ✧ All schools are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise. |
| RED or BLACK | |
| (i) Issued from 5:00 p.m. onwards and before 6:00 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ Classes of evening schools are to be suspended.✧ Schools should implement contingency measures and arrange staff to look after the students who might arrive and ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |
| (ii) Issued from 6:00 p.m. onwards and before 7:00 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">✧ Students of evening schools do not have to attend school.✧ Schools are required to keep their premises open, implement contingency measures and arrange staff to look after the students who have arrived.✧ Evening schools that are in session should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours. They should ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |

| Rainstorm Warning Signal | Corresponding measures |
|--|--|
| (iii) Issued from 7:00 p.m. onwards and up to 11:00 p.m. | ✧ All evening schools should continue the lessons until the end of the normal school hours and should ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |

“Special Announcement on Flooding in the Northern New Territories” and “Announcement on Localised Heavy Rain”

9. A “Special Announcement on Flooding in the Northern New Territories” (SAFNNT) will be issued by HKO whenever heavy rain affects the northern New Territories and flooding is expected to occur or is occurring over the area. Once issued, the announcement will be disseminated through different channels immediately, including the radio, television, HKO’s website and mobile App “MyObservatory”. Schools in the northern New Territories should assess their own vulnerability to flooding based on the past experiences and decide whether class suspension is required when SAFNNT is issued. If schools consider that it is necessary to suspend classes, they may proceed after consulting their respective School Development Sections. Schools are also required to inform all school staff, students and relevant parties of the decision and related arrangements.

10. HKO is expected to introduce the “Announcement on Localised Heavy Rain” in July. When heavy rain occurs in other individual areas and the rainfall does not reach the criteria to issue Red or Black Rainstorm Warning, HKO will issue the “Announcement on Localised Heavy Rain” with reference to recorded rainfall. The affected areas and the amount of rainfall recorded will be indicated in the announcement so that the public can grasp the latest situation and take precautionary measures. Channels for issuing the announcement include the radio, television, HKO’s website and mobile App “MyObservatory”. Schools in the affected area should assess their own vulnerability to the heavy rain based on their past experiences and decide whether class suspension is required when “Announcement on Localised Heavy Rain” is issued. If schools consider that it is necessary to suspend classes, they could activate necessary measures with reference to paragraph 9 and inform relevant parties in accordance with the established procedures.

Landslip Warnings

11. Schools with slopes within or near the school boundary should pay particular attention to Landslip Warnings issued to alert the public to the high risk of landslips resulting from heavy persistent rain. School heads should refer to the EDB Circular No.

25/1998 on “Administrative Procedures for Safety of Schools in the Vicinity of Slopes” and take necessary precautionary measures.

Class Suspension and the “Weather Information for Schools” Webpage

12. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above or the RED/BLACK Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued, EDB will arrange radio and television announcements on suspension of classes or cancellation of EDB activities. Individual evening schools that see a genuine need to make a radio and television announcement on their specific situations can email their announcement in PDF format (sample at Appendix 1) to the following address before 5:45 p.m.:

suspclass@edb.gov.hk

The schools concerned are required to call 9193 9541 to confirm receipt of the announcement for forwarding to the electronic media. However, it will be at the discretion of TV/radio stations whether or not to broadcast the announcement.

13. In exceptional circumstances, EDB may announce the suspension of classes in a particular district or certain districts. If this is the case, students whose schools are located in such district(s) as well as students who live in such district(s) need not go to school. Schools are therefore required to ensure that their staff and students know exactly the district in which the schools are located and the district in which students live. This information should be checked at the beginning of each school year. Schools should consider giving allowance to the affected students for lateness or absence from school in the evenings with inclement weather or flooding and such students will not be penalised for that reason.

14. For more information regarding the regional weather, schools may visit the HKO webpage on “Weather Information for Schools”:

<http://www.weather.gov.hk/school/main.shtml>

15. In cases when EDB has not made any announcement for suspension of classes but individual schools consider it necessary to suspend their classes having regard to local weather, road, slope or traffic conditions, the schools concerned may proceed after consulting their respective School Development Sections. They should at the same time activate the contingency plan and inform relevant parties according to the established procedures.

Public Examinations

16. Suspension of classes as a result of tropical cyclones or heavy persistent rain does not necessarily imply the postponement of a public examination scheduled for that day. This is particularly so for the school premises that are used as centres for public examinations. Heads of schools should listen to radio or television announcements made separately by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority regarding arrangements of public examinations.

17. Unless an announcement has been made that a public examination is cancelled or postponed, it should be assumed that the examination will continue to be held as scheduled. School premises to be used as examination centres should therefore remain open for examination purposes.

Contingency Plan

18. School heads are expected to ensure that their schools have worked out and put in place the following arrangements:

- (a) Schools are required to draw up a contingency plan in advance to deal with suspension of classes due to inclement weather. The contingency plan should be comprehensive (including communication mechanism, work arrangements of school staff, etc.) to cover all likely situations that schools may need to deal with during inclement weather. The contingency measures should be practical and readily comprehensible to the parties concerned. The contingency plan should therefore be devised in consultation with teachers and other parties involved so that they will co-operate fully to avoid misunderstanding or disputes. The safety of the parties concerned should also be taken into account when drawing up the contingency plan. For items to be included in the contingency plan, please refer to Appendix 2.
- (b) If there is a chance that school events might be postponed or cancelled under inclement weather conditions, schools should inform all relevant parties of the contingency arrangements in advance.
- (c) If EDB announces the suspension of classes before the school session begins, school heads should activate the contingency plan to ensure that the school premises are open, staffing is sufficient to look after the students who might arrive, and safe and proper arrangements are made for these students to return home at an appropriate time.

- (d) If schools are in session when EDB announces the immediate suspension of classes, schools should also implement the contingency measures to ensure that their students are kept in school until safe and proper arrangements have been made for them to return home at an appropriate time. An announcement on suspension of classes does not mean sending all students home immediately.
- (e) In case students cannot return to school or arrive late for school because of inclement weather, road, slope or traffic conditions, they will not be penalised under such exceptional circumstances.
- (f) School staff, students and other parties involved should be fully informed of the above arrangements and the contingency plan by circulars / letters.

Briefing Sessions

19. EDB will organise four identical briefing sessions on 5 and 6 July 2016 to familiarise schools with the arrangements mentioned in this circular. Representatives from HKO will also brief participants on weather information related to tropical cyclones and rainstorms. For details and enrolment of the briefing sessions, please refer to the EDB Training Calendar (Course ID: SCHD20160092).

Enquiries

20. For enquiries about school arrangements, please contact the respective School Development Officers. For enquiries about media announcements, please contact the Information and Public Relations Section at 3509 7442.

Ms Teresa CHAN
for Permanent Secretary for Education

*XXX Evening School
xxx Road, Fanling, New Territories*

DD/MM/YY

“Here is a special announcement by XXX Evening School:

Due to temporary closure of ABC Road for removal of a 5-metre-tall collapsed tree, classes of XXX Evening School will be suspended today (DD/MM/YY). Students should check the school web page for updates about the arrangement.”

School Chop

Enquiries : XXX Chan, School Head

Telephone : XXXX XXXX

Contingency Plan

The following items should be included in the contingency plan:

- (a) Communication mechanism – Schools may use various means of communication, including school’s webpage, mobile telephone messages system, personal email system, etc.;
- (b) Duty roster of school staff during class suspension – Schools should work out, in consultation with employees, work arrangements and contingency measures to be implemented during typhoons and rainstorms by making reference to the *Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms* issued by the Labour Department;
- (c) Arrangements of school events during class suspension, including examinations, tests, internal and external activities, etc.; and
- (d) Arrangements for looking after the students who have arrived at school during class suspension.