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Government of the HKSAR
Education Bureau
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EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 4/2016

Tropical Cyclones and Heavy Persistent Rain Arrangements for Kindergartens and Day Schools

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors and heads of all **kindergartens**
and **day schools** - for action
- (b) Heads of all Sections - for information]

SUMMARY

The purpose of this circular is to inform schools of the arrangements to be implemented under inclement weather conditions. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 6/2015 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, including kindergartens, are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is issued*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of kindergartens, schools for children with physical disability and schools for children with intellectual disability are to be suspended. ✧ Other 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of all kindergartens, schools for children with physical disability and schools for children with intellectual disability are to remain suspended. ✧ Unless previous announcement has been made to the effect that classes will be suspended for the entire day, other schools are to resume if Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal 3 has been issued before 5:30 a.m. (for AM and whole-day schools) / 10:30 a.m. (for PM schools).
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is replaced by Signal No. 1 or when all tropical cyclone signals are cancelled	✧ All schools are to resume with the next session unless previous announcement has been made to the effect that classes will be suspended for the entire day.

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.

- * If students have already set out for school when Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is issued, kindergartens, schools for children with physical disability and schools for children with intellectual disability 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 conditions. The same applies to all schools if the Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 is issued when students have already set out for school².

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:

https://www.hko.gov.hk/en/wxinfo/rainfall/item_list.htm

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, including kindergartens, are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise.
RED or BLACK	
(i) Issued from 5:30 am onwards and before 6:00 am	✧ Classes of AM and whole-day schools are to be suspended all day. ✧ Students who have not left for school should stay home. ✧ 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.

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.

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Corresponding measures
(ii) Issued from 6:00 am onwards and before 8:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Students of AM and whole-day schools do not have to attend school that day. ✧ Students who have not left for school should stay home. ✧ Schools are required to keep their premises open and implement contingency measures to look after students who have arrived at school. ✧ If students learn about the class suspension announcement on their way to school, they should decide whether to proceed with their journey to school taking into consideration the rain, road, slope or traffic conditions. ✧ Students who have already arrived at school should remain in school until it is safe for them to return home. ✧ Parents do not need to pick up their children from school immediately.
(iii) Issued from 8:00 am onwards and before 10:30 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ AM and whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.
(iv) Issued from 10:30 am onwards and before 11:00 am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of PM schools are to be suspended. ✧ Students of PM schools who have not left for school should stay home. ✧ AM and whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.
(v) Issued from 11:00 am onwards and before 1:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Students of PM schools do not have to attend school that day. ✧ Students of PM schools who have not left for school should stay home. ✧ PM schools are required to keep their premises open until the end of normal school hours and arrange staff to look after the students who have arrived at school. They ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Corresponding measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ If students learn about the class suspension announcement on their way to school, they should decide whether to proceed with their journey to school taking into consideration the rain, road, slope or traffic conditions. ✧ Students who have already arrived at school should remain in school until it is safe for them to return home. ✧ Parents do not need to pick up their children from school immediately. ✧ AM and whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.
(vi) Issued from 1:00 pm onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ All schools should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.

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

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 / Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres. Schools are also required to inform all school staff, students, parents and relevant parties of the decision and related arrangements.

10. HKO plans to launch the “Localised Heavy Rain Advisory” service in the second quarter of 2021 to replace the existing “Announcement on Localised Heavy Rain” service. Under the new service, when heavy rain occurs in localised area(s) but the rainfall does not reach the criteria to issue Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal, HKO will issue the “Localised Heavy Rain Advisory” with reference to recorded rainfall

and rainfall forecasts from its nowcasting system to advise members of the public of localised heavy rain as early as possible and assist with their early preparation. 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 "Localised Heavy Rain Advisory" 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.

11. Moreover, parents could exercise their discretion in deciding whether or not to send their children to school having regard to inclement weather conditions. In the event of adverse local weather, road, slope or traffic conditions, parents should keep their children at home for the sake of safety. In this connection, schools should reassure parents that allowance will be given to the affected students for lateness or absence from school at parents' discretion on the day with inclement weather or flooding and such students will not be penalised for that reason. Schools may also encourage parents to teach their young children how to cope with the inconvenience caused by heavy rain, for example, reminding them to bring an extra pair of socks and shoes to school.

Landslip Warnings

12. 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

13. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 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. Schools that see a genuine need to make an announcement on their specific situations can send their announcement to school staff, parents, students and relevant parties through electronic means (e.g. School Webpage, SMS, Mobile Apps and e-platform, etc.). To keep stakeholders abreast of the latest information, schools should inform all relevant parties of the means of announcement in advance.

14. 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, parents 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.

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

<https://www.hko.gov.hk/en/school/school.htm>

16. 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/Joint Office for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres. They should at the same time activate the contingency plan and inform relevant parties according to the established procedures.

Public Examinations

17. 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.

18. 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

19. 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, lunch supply, school bus services, 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, parents, school bus operators, lunch box suppliers 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.

- (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) Parents should be advised that they should exercise their discretion in deciding whether or not to send their children to school at the time of inclement weather. They should keep their children at home if they consider that local weather, road, slope or traffic conditions at that time have yet to resume normal.
- (f) Alternative arrangements regarding school tests or examinations should be made for students who cannot return to school or arrive late because of inclement weather, road, slope or traffic conditions. Schools should also re-assure parents that their children will not be penalised under such exceptional circumstances.
- (g) School staff, students, parents and other parties involved should be fully informed of the above arrangements and the contingency plan by circulars / letters.
- (h) Drivers and escorts of school buses and school private light buses should be provided with contact telephone numbers for communication in case of emergency during inclement weather.

Enquiries

20. For enquiries about school arrangements, please contact the respective School Development Officers or Services 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

Contingency Plan

The following items should be included in the contingency plan:

- (a) Communication mechanism – Schools may use various means of communication, including school 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 (The Education Bureau has taken out for aided and caput schools the Block Insurance Policy, under which the Employees' Compensation Insurance covers injury of a school employee caused by accident arising from and in the course of employment (including the discharge of duties at school when a typhoon or rainstorm warning is issued));
- (c) Arrangements of school events during class suspension, including examinations, tests, internal and external activities, lunch supply and school bus services, etc.;
- (d) Arrangements for looking after the students who have arrived at school during class suspension; and
- (e) Arrangements for parents who are unable to look after their children during class suspension, where applicable.