

5 July 2013

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 12/2013

**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 under the inclement weather conditions. This circular supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 3/2007 dated 10 April 2007 on the same subject.

DETAILS

2. The content of this circular relates to the safety of students and staff. All schools are required to comply with all the arrangements and act accordingly.
3. These arrangements apply:
 - (a) in the event of tropical cyclones and heavy persistent rain; and
 - (b) upon 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. The development of tropical cyclones is progressive and the effects are more lasting. With the announcement of suspension of classes 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. Therefore, schools should continue their lessons when RED/BLACK rainstorm warning signal is issued during lesson time and should not send students home immediately. (Please refer to paragraphs 6 and 8 below for detailed arrangements.)

Tropical Cyclones

5. Schools should listen to radio or television announcements when tropical cyclones affect Hong Kong. For full details of the announcements, schools may visit the webpage “Press Releases” on the Government website at the following URL:

<http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/today.htm>

6. The following general arrangements will apply and the EDB will make appropriate public announcements accordingly¹:

| Weather condition | Action to be taken |
|---|---|
| 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* | ✧ Classes of all 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 | ✧ Classes of all kindergartens, schools for children with physical disability and schools for children with |

¹ According to S85A of the Education Ordinance, schools may conduct educational courses or give instructions on a general holiday. In this connection, EDB will make public announcements during holidays where appropriate.

| Weather condition | Action to be taken |
|---|--|
| | 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 by 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 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. |

* If students have already set out for school when the No. 3 signal 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 staffed until proper arrangements are made for arriving students to return home at an appropriate time. The same applies to all schools if the Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 signal is issued when students have already set out for school.

Heavy Persistent Rain

7. Schools should listen to radio or television announcements regularly during rainstorms. For more detailed information regarding rainfall distribution, schools may visit the webpage of the Hong Kong Observatory at the following URL:

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

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

| Rainstorm Warning | Action to be taken |
|-------------------|---|
| AMBER | ✧ Unless the EDB has made special announcement on suspension of classes, all schools, including kindergartens, are to operate as usual. |

| Rainstorm Warning | Action to be taken |
|---|---|
| RED or BLACK | |
| (i) Issued before 6:00 a.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of AM and Whole-day schools are to be suspended all day. ✧ Schools are required to activate contingency plan and arrange staff to look after students who might arrive and ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |
| (ii) Issued between 6:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of AM and Whole-day schools are to be suspended. ✧ Schools are required to ensure that their premises are open until the end of the normal school hours and arrange staff to look after those students who have arrived at school. They ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. ✧ Students who have not left for school should stay home. |
| (iii) Issued between 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of the normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |
| (iv) Issued between 10:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of PM schools are to be suspended. ✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of the normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. |
| (v) Issued between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ Classes of PM schools are to be suspended. ✧ PM schools are required to ensure that their premises are open until the end of the normal school hours and arrange staff to look after those students who have arrived at school. They ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. ✧ Students of PM schools who have not yet left for |

| Rainstorm Warning | Action to be taken |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | <p>school should stay home.</p> <p>✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of the normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.</p> |
| (vi) Issued after 1:00 p.m. | <p>✧ All schools should continue the lessons until the end of the normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.</p> |

Flooding in Northern New Territories

9. A “Special Announcement on Flooding in the northern New Territories” (SAFNNT) will be issued by the Hong Kong Observatory whenever heavy rain affects the northern New Territories and flooding is expected to occur or is occurring over the area. Once issued, it will be broadcast over radio and television. Heads of schools in the northern New Territories should assess their own vulnerability to flooding on the basis of past experience and with the advice from the Drainage Services Department where necessary. Once it is decided to suspend their classes when a SAFNNT is issued, schools concerned are required to inform all school staff, students, parents, those affected and the respective School Development Sections of the decision and relevant arrangements.

Landslip

10. Schools with slopes within or near the school boundary should pay particular attention to Landslip Warnings issued to alert the public of the high risk of landslips from persistent heavy 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

11. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or above or the RED/BLACK rainstorm warning signal is issued, the EDB will arrange for radio and television announcements on suspension of classes or cancellation of EDB activities. Individual schools that see a genuine need to make a radio and

television announcement for some school specific situations can email a PDF file of the announcement (sample at the Appendix) to the following address:

suspclass@edb.gov.hk

The schools concerned are required to call at 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.

12. In exceptional circumstances, the EDB may announce the suspension of classes in only one or just a few districts. In that case, students whose schools are in that/those district(s) as well as students who are living in that/those districts need not go to school. School heads are therefore required to ensure that their staff, parents and students know the district at which their schools are located and the district in which they live. This should be checked at the beginning of each school year. School heads should re-assure parents that allowance will be given to the affected students for lateness or absence from school at parents' discretion on the day when inclement weather or flooding occurs.

13. For more information regarding the regional weather, schools may visit the webpage "Weather Information for Schools" on the website of the Hong Kong Observatory at the following URL:

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

14. In cases where the 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, traffic or transport conditions, the schools concerned may proceed after consulting their respective School Development Section. They should at the same time activate school's contingency plan and inform relevant parties according to the established mechanism.

Public Examinations

15. 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, particularly those 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 the public examinations.

16. 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.

Formulation of Contingency Plans

17. School heads are requested to ensure and take forward the following:
- (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 sufficiently comprehensive to cover all likely situations pertaining to the school during inclement weather and that the communication mechanism² as well as the courses of action to be taken are practical and understood by all parties concerned. The contingency plan should therefore be worked out in consultation with teachers, parents, school bus operators and others involved so that they will co-operate fully to avoid misunderstanding or disputes. Moreover, school heads must take account of the safety of all parties concerned in drawing up the contingency plan.
 - (b) If there is a chance that school events might be postponed or cancelled under inclement weather conditions, schools should communicate the contingency arrangements to all relevant parties in advance.
 - (c) If the EDB announces the suspension of classes before the school session begins, school heads should activate the contingency plan to ensure that the school premises will be open, appropriately staffed so as to look after the students who might arrive and that safe and proper arrangements are made for these students to return home at an appropriate time.
 - (d) If schools are in session when the EDB announces the immediate suspension of classes, school heads should also activate the contingency plan 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.

² Schools may choose various means of communication including school's webpage, mobile telephone messages system, personal e-mail system, etc.

- (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, traffic or transport conditions at that time have yet to resume normal.
- (f) Alternative arrangements should be made regarding school tests or examinations for students who cannot return to school or arrive late because of inclement weather, road, slope, traffic or transport conditions. School heads should also re-assure parents that their children will not be penalised under such exceptional circumstances.
- (g) School staff, students, parents and those involved should be fully informed of the above arrangements and the contingency plan by circular 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

18. For enquiries, please contact your respective School Development Officers (for school arrangements) or our Information and Public Relations Officers at 3509 7442 (for media announcements).

Miss P L WU
for Permanent Secretary for Education

XXX Primary School
xxx Road, Fanling, New Territories

“Here is a special announcement by XXX Primary School:

Due to temporary closure of ABC Road for removal of a 5-metre-tall collapsed tree, classes of XXX Primary School will be suspended today (DD/MM/YY). Parents should check the school web pages for updates about school resumption and e-Class arrangements.”

DD/MM/YY

School
Chop

Enquiries : XXX Chan, School Head

Telephone : XXXX XXXX