

10 April 2007

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 3/2007

(Formerly referred as EMB Circular NO. 3/2007)

**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 and the launch of a new webpage “Weather Information for Schools” on the website of the Hong Kong Observatory. Two identical seminars in April 2007 have been arranged to facilitate school personnel’s understanding of the detailed arrangements. This circular serves to supersede the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) Circular No. 3/2005 dated 14 April 2005 on the same subject.

DETAILS

- 2. This circular concerns the safety of students and staff. All schools should comply with all the arrangements and advice 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 case 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 schools 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 signal is issued during lesson time and should not send students home immediately. (Please refer to paragraphs 5 and 7 below for detailed arrangements.)

Tropical Cyclones

5. Schools should listen to radio or television announcements when tropical cyclones affect Hong Kong. The following general arrangements will apply and appropriate public announcements will be made:

Weather condition	Action to be taken
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 1 is issued	✧ All schools, including kindergartens, are to operate as usual.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is issued*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ All kindergartens, schools for physically handicapped children and schools for mentally handicapped children are to close. ✧ Other schools are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 or above is issued*	✧ All schools are to close.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is replaced by Signal No. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ All kindergartens, schools for physically handicapped children and schools for mentally handicapped children are to remain closed. ✧ Other schools are to resume with the next session unless road or other conditions remain adverse.
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.

- * If students have already set out for school when the No. 3 signal is issued, kindergartens, schools for physically handicapped children and schools for mentally handicapped children 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

6. 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>

7. In the event of rainstorms, the following general arrangements will apply and appropriate public announcements will be made:

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Action to be taken
AMBER	✧ Unless the Education and Manpower Bureau has made special announcement on closure of schools, all schools, including kindergartens, will operate as usual.
RED or BLACK	
(i) Before 6:15 a.m.	✧ AM and Whole-day schools will be closed all day.
(ii) 6:15 a.m. – 8:00 a.m.	<p>✧ There will be no lessons for all AM and Whole-day schools.</p> <p>✧ Schools should ensure that their premises are open until the end of the normal school hours and arrange staff to look after those students who have left home for school. They should also ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.</p> <p>✧ Students who have not left for school should stay home.</p>

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Action to be taken
(iii) 8:00 a.m. – 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 should ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.
(iv) 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ PM schools will be closed. ✧ AM and Whole-day 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.
(v) 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ There will be no lessons for PM schools. ✧ PM schools should ensure that their premises are open until the end of the normal school hours and arrange staff to look after those students who have left home for school. They should also ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. ✧ Students of PM schools who have not yet left for school should stay home. ✧ AM and Whole-day 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.
(vi) After 1:00 p.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ All 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.

Flooding in Northern New Territories

8. 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 it is available, and decide whether their schools should be closed when a SAFNNT is issued. If necessary, schools may contact the Emergency Duty Team of the EMB to make announcements as detailed at paragraphs 10 and 14 below.

Landslip

9. In addition, 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 [EMB Circular No. 25/98](#) dated 29 July 1998 on “Administrative Procedures for Safety of Schools in the Vicinity of Slopes” and take necessary precautionary measures.

Emergency Duty Team

10. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or the AMBER rainstorm signal is issued on a school day, the EMB will activate an Emergency Duty Team in the headquarters to collect updated information on weather, road, slope, traffic and transport conditions from 5:45 a.m. It will arrange for radio and television announcements on closure of schools or cancellation of activities. The team will be ready to assist any school wishing to make an announcement. Schools using the service should fax the announcement (sample at the Appendix) to the Emergency Duty Team and then follow up by telephone.

Fax no.: 2575 7050
Telephone no.: 3509 7431-34 (4 lines)

11. Upon receipt of the announcement, the Emergency Duty Team will fax the announcement to the electronic media. However, it will be at the discretion of TV/radio stations whether to broadcast the announcement.

Closure of Schools and Launching of New Webpage

12. If schools are in session and the weather is likely to deteriorate rapidly due to approaching typhoon or special circumstances, the EMB will announce over radio and television to advise immediate suspension of classes. (Please refer to paragraphs 5 and 7 above.)

13. In exceptional circumstances, the EMB may announce the closure of schools 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 should not go to school. School heads should therefore 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 their discretion on the day when inclement weather or flooding occurs.

14. 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>

School heads may exercise their discretion on closure of schools should local weather, road, slope, traffic or transport conditions warrant the closure of a school and a general announcement has not been made by the EMB, or giving allowance to affected students for being late or absent from school due to inclement weather. If a school head decides to close the school, he should notify the School Development Section concerned as soon as possible. In such a case, the school head should also contact the Emergency Duty Team in the EMB headquarters to arrange for an announcement to be made. (For details, please refer to paragraph 10 above.) The announcement should, as far as possible, be made before students set out for school.

Public Examinations

15. Closure of schools, particularly those used as centres for public examinations, as a result of tropical cyclones or heavy persistent rain does not necessarily imply the postponement of a public examination scheduled for that day. 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. Schools 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 should draw up a contingency plan in advance to deal with closure of school or 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 courses of action to be taken are practical and understood by all 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 should

take account of the safety of all parties concerned in drawing up the contingency plan.

(b) If EMB announces the closure of schools after some students have set out for school, school heads should activate the contingency plan to ensure that the school premises will be open, that some teachers living close by will be at school to look after the students arriving and that safe and proper arrangements are made for these students to return home at an appropriate time.

(c) If schools are in session when the EMB 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 closure of school or suspension of classes does not mean sending all students home immediately.

(d) 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 are still not completely normal.

(e) 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.

(f) School staff, students, parents and those involved should be fully informed of the above arrangements and the contingency plan by circular letters.

(g) 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.

Seminars

18. Two identical seminars on “Tropical Cyclones and Heavy Persistent Rain Arrangements for Schools” have been scheduled on 13 April 2007 and 30 April 2007. Please refer to the Training Calendar available on the EMB website for details.

Enquiries

19. For enquiries, please contact your respective School Development Officers or our Information and Public Relations officers at 3509 7442.

Mrs. Michelle WONG
for Secretary for Education and Manpower

XXX Primary School
xxx Sha Tau Kok Road, Fanling, New Territories

“Here is a special announcement by XXX Primary School:

Due to deteriorating weather conditions, the Parents’ Day of XXX Primary School scheduled for today (5 July) will be postponed. Parents will be informed of the new date for the Parents’ Day later.”

5 July 2007

School
Chop

Enquiries : XXX Chan, School Head
Telephone : XXXXXXXX