

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 6/2022

**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. 5/2016 dated 28 June 2016 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 the 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 the 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, the 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

Heavy Persistent Rain

7. 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 the EDB will make appropriate public announcements accordingly:

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Corresponding measures
When Amber Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued	✧ All schools are to operate as usual unless advised otherwise.
When Red or Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued	
(i) 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 at school and ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.
(ii) 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.

written permission will be announced on the EDB website together with the public announcement of class suspension.

Rainstorm Warning Signal	Corresponding measures
(iii) 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 “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. Schools are also required to inform all school staff, students, parents and relevant parties of the decision and related arrangements.

10. 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. 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.

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.

Special Weather Conditions

12. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal is in force, if the HKO assesses that Hong Kong is or will be under the combined effect of strong wind and prolonged rainstorm³, and disseminates to the public the information “The combined effect of strong wind and prolonged rainstorm is affecting/expected to affect Hong Kong”, the EDB will refer to the framework of class suspension and types of school stated in para 8 of this circular to make the relevant announcements accordingly (for example, in accordance with the relevant announcement made by the HKO during 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., the EDB will make class suspension announcements for evening schools. If announcements are made during school hours, schools should continue lessons until the end of normal school hours and ought to ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home). Schools should pay attention to the announcements made via radio, television or mobile app “GovHK Notifications” and make appropriate arrangements in accordance with the instructions from the EDB.

Class Suspension and the “Weather Information for Schools” Webpage

13. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above or the Red/Black Rainstorm Warning Signal is issued, the EDB will arrange radio and television announcements on suspension of classes or cancellation of the 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, Short Message Services (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, the 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.

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

³ The risk of flooding brought about by the combined effect of tropical cyclone-induced strong wind and prolonged rainstorm may be higher than the totality of impacts arising from the two phenomena occurring alone. Details are available at the HKO’s online educational resources (<https://www.hko.gov.hk/en/education/tropical-cyclone/weather-effects-and-impact/00674-Beware-of-Multi-Hazard-Combined-Effect.html>).

16. In cases when 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 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

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 pay attention 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 all likely situation that schools may need to deal with during inclement weather (e.g. suspension of classes). 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.

- (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 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 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 the 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.

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.

(K K LEE)
for Permanent Secretary for Education

Contingency Plan

The following items should be included in the contingency plan (the following list is by no means exhaustive, schools should exercise professional judgement and include relevant items based on their individual school circumstances):

- (a) Communication mechanism – Schools may use various means of communication, including school webpage, Short Message Service (SMS), Mobile Apps, e-platform, and 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.