

1 April 2003

EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 15/2003

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)

This circular concerns the safety of students and staff. All school heads and staff concerned must read this with care and execute the arrangements accordingly.

2. 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.

3. Special attention of the school heads is drawn to the different arrangements in case of tropical cyclones and heavy persistent rainfall. The development of tropical cyclones is progressive and the effects more lasting. With the announcement of schools suspension in case of tropical cyclones, school heads should arrange students to return home under safe conditions. However, as adverse situation caused by heavy persistent rain could develop quickly and dissipate quickly, schools should continue their lessons even if red/black rainstorm signal is issued during lesson time and should not send students home immediately (please refer to paragraphs 4 and 6 below for detailed arrangements)

Tropical Cyclones

4. School heads 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, to operate as usual.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is issued*	All kindergartens, schools for physically handicapped children and schools for mentally handicapped children to close. Other schools to operate as usual unless advised otherwise.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal Pre-No. 8 / No. 8 or above is issued*	All schools to close.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 8 or above is replaced by No. 3 signal	All kindergartens, schools for physically handicapped children and schools for mentally handicapped children to remain closed. Other schools to resume with the next session unless road or other conditions remain adverse.
When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 is replaced by No.1 signal or when all signals are cancelled	All schools 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 their contingency plan to ensure 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

5. School heads should listen to radio or television announcements regularly during rainstorms. For more detailed information regarding rainfall distribution, school heads may visit the homepage of the Hong Kong Observatory at the following URL

6. 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 and arrange staff to look after those students who have left home for their schools until the end of normal school hours. They should also ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.</p> <p>✧ Students who have not left for their school should stay home.</p>
(iii) 8:00 a.m. – 10.30 a.m.	✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of 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.	<p>✧ PM schools will be closed.</p> <p>✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of normal school hours and should ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.</p>

(v) Between 11:00 a.m. and 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 and arrange staff to look after those students who have left home for their schools until the end of normal school hours. They should also ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home. ✧ Students of PM schools who have not yet left for their school should stay home. ✧ AM and Whole-day schools should continue the lessons until the end of 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 normal school hours and should ensure that conditions are safe before allowing students to return home.

Flooding in Northern New Territories

7. The Hong Kong Observatory will introduce “special announcements of flooding in the low-lying northern New Territories” (SAFNNT) to alert the public to potential flooding due to heavy rain. Once issued, they will be broadcast over radio and television. Heads of schools in 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. It may be necessary for them to contact our Information and Public Relations colleagues to make announcements as detailed at paragraphs 9 and 12 below to ensure the safety of students.

Landslip

8. In addition, 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 from persistent heavy rainfall. School heads should refer to Administration 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

9. When Tropical Cyclone Warning Signal No. 3 or the AMBER rainstorm signal is issued on a school day, the Education and Manpower Bureau (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 Appendix) to the Emergency Duty Team and then follow up by telephone

Fax no.: 2575 7050

Telephone no.: 2892 6193-96 (4 lines)

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

10. If schools are in session and the weather is likely to deteriorate rapidly due to approaching typhoon or special circumstances, EMB will announce over radio and television to advise immediate suspension of classes (please refer to paragraphs 4 and 6 above).

Closure of Schools in Individual Districts

11. In exceptional circumstances, EMB may announce the closure of schools in only one or just a few districts. Students living in these districts should not go to school even if their schools are located elsewhere. 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.

Closure of Individual Schools

12. If local weather, road, slope, traffic or transport conditions warrant the closure of a school and a general announcement has not been made by EMB, the school head may close the school and then notify the School Development Section concerned as soon as possible. In such cases, the school head should contact the Emergency Duty Team in EMB headquarters to arrange for an announcement to be made (for details, please refer to paragraph 9 above). The announcement should, as far as possible, be made before students set out for school.

Public Examinations

13. 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.

14. 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.

Responsibilities of School Heads

15. School heads should draw up a contingency plan in advance to deal with the closure of schools or the suspension of classes due to inclement weather. If EMB announces the closure of schools after some students have set out for school, school heads should activate their 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.

16. If schools are in session when EMB announces the immediate suspension of classes, school heads should also activate their 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.

17. School head should ensure that the contingency plan is 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.

18. School heads should advise parents that they should use their discretion in deciding whether or not to send their children to school at 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.

19. School heads should make alternative arrangements 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.

20. School heads should ensure that their staff, students, parents and those involved are fully informed of the above arrangements and the contingency plan by circular letters.

Communication with School Buses

21. School heads should provide drivers and escorts of school buses and school private light buses with contact telephone numbers for communication in case of emergency during inclement weather.

Enquiries

22. For enquiries, please contact either your respective School Development Officers or our Information and Public Relations officers at 2892 6198.

23. This circular supersedes Administration Circular No. 9/2002 issued on 26 March 2002.

S. L. MA
for Secretary for Education & 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 May) will be postponed. Parents will be informed of the new date for Parents’ Day later.”

Xxxday, 5 May 2003

School
Chop

Enquiries : XXX Chan, School Head
Telephone : 2XXXXXXX