

Air Quality Health Index will remain higher than normal today and tomorrow

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal pollution levels. At 2pm today (July 18), the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at Tung Chung Air Quality Monitoring station reached 10+, corresponding to the "Serious" health risk category. According to the EPD's forecast, it is expected that the AQHI will remain higher than normal today and tomorrow.

Under the influence of the outer subsiding air of Tropical Cyclone Danas and the area of low pressure over the northeastern part of the South China Sea, the weather in Hong Kong today is hazy with sunny periods and light to moderate westerly winds. Hong Kong is being affected by an air mass with higher background pollutant concentrations. Higher than normal levels of ozone and particulates have been recorded in the territory since this morning. The sunshine enhances photochemical smog activity and the formation of ozone and fine particulates, resulting in high pollution in the Pearl River Delta region. The high level of ozone has promoted the formation of nitrogen dioxide, particularly in parts of the urban areas and at the roadside.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, the area of low pressure over the northeastern part of the South China Sea will move towards the vicinity of Taiwan, and will bring unsettled weather to the coast of southeastern China in the next couple of days. It is expected that pollution levels will be improved by then.

With a health risk category in the "Very High" range or above, children, the elderly and persons with existing heart or respiratory illnesses are advised to reduce physical exertion and outdoor activities to a minimum or avoid such activities. The general public is advised to reduce, or reduce to a minimum, outdoor physical exertion, and to reduce time staying outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. As health effects of air pollutants may vary for individuals, persons who are in doubt or experience discomfort should seek advice from health-care professionals. The public may visit the Centre for Health Protection's website (www.chp.gov.hk/en/content/9/460/3557.html) for more information on health effects of air pollution and relevant health advice.

The Education Bureau (EDB) urges all schools to visit the EDB's website for appropriate measures to safeguard students' health and take note of changes in the index. The relevant hyperlink is as follows: www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-activities/sch-activities-guidelines/index.html.

When the AQHI is at the "Very High" level, employers of outdoor workers performing heavy manual work are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their

employees such as reducing outdoor physical exertion and the time of their stay outdoors, especially in areas with heavy traffic. At the "Serious" level, employers of all outdoor workers are advised to assess the risk of outdoor work and take appropriate preventive measures to protect the health of their employees.

Members of the public can check the current AQHI readings at the EPD's website (www.aqhi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline at 2827 8541.