

Labour Department launches Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme

The Labour Department (LD) announced today (July 15) the launch of the Re-employment Allowance Pilot Scheme (REA Scheme), which is open for registration from today, to encourage elderly and middle-aged people to join the labour force.

The Chief Executive, in his Policy Address last year, announced the introduction of a three-year REA Scheme to increase the incentive to elderly and middle-aged people to rejoin the workforce. Any Hong Kong residents aged 40 or above who are legally employable in Hong Kong and have not been in paid employment for three consecutive months or more are eligible to join the REA Scheme. Participants who have worked full-time for six consecutive months will be provided with an allowance of \$10,000, while those who have worked full-time for 12 consecutive months will be given an additional allowance of \$10,000. The amount of allowance for participants completing part-time employment will be halved. Each participant can receive a maximum re-employment allowance of \$20,000 during the implementation period of the REA Scheme.

Employers of participants of the REA Scheme can at the same time enrol in the Employment Programme for the Elderly and Middle-aged (EPEM), and will be provided with on-the-job training (OJT) allowance. To encourage employers to take on participants of the REA Scheme, LD will extend the duration of OJT allowance under EPEM for eligible employers to six to 12 months.

A spokesperson for the LD said, "The REA Scheme encourages elderly and middle-aged people to return to the employment market, and helps unleash this potential labour force, which is beneficial to both employees and employers."

Persons interested in joining the REA Scheme can visit the dedicated webpage (www.jobs.gov.hk/rea), call the hotline manned by the service organisations commissioned by the Government at 2116 0131 or 2397 7277 or call LD at 2951 4634 for details and registration procedures of the Scheme.

Flag-raising ceremony cancelled

Â Â Â Â Owing to the thunderstorm warning, the flag-raising ceremony to be conducted at Golden Bauhinia Square, Wan Chai at 8am today (July 15) will be cancelled.

Â Â Â Â If the thunderstorm warning is cancelled and weather conditions

permit by then, the flag-raising ceremony may be resumed without further notice.

Employers, contractors and employees should be aware of electrical safety at work during rainstorm

As the rainstorm warning has been issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, the Labour Department (LD) reminds employers and contractors that they should adopt necessary work arrangements and take suitable safety measures to protect the safety of their employees when they are carrying out electrical work or handling electrical plant.

A spokesman for the LD said today (July 14) that employers and contractors should avoid assigning employees to carry out electrical work (like electric arc welding work) or handle electrical plant at places affected by rainstorms, and should refer to the "Code of Practice in Times of Adverse Weather and 'Extreme Conditions'" and the "Guide on Safety at Work in times of Inclement Weather" issued by the LD.

Even if electrical work is carried out or electrical plant is handled at places not affected by the rainstorm, suitable safety measures must still be adopted to prevent electric shock as the air would be more humid. Such measures include:

- (i) Ensure that all live parts of an electrical installation are isolated from the power supply source and rendered dead, and the isolation from the power supply source must be maintained as long as electrical work is being carried out;
- (ii) Before carrying out any electrical work or handling any electrical plant, cut off and lock out the power supply source, then test the circuit concerned to confirm it is dead and display suitable warning notices, and issue a work permit thereafter;
- (iii) Ensure that protective devices (such as suitable and adequate fuses and circuit breakers) for the electrical installations or electrical plant have been installed and maintained in good working order, and portable electric tools must be double-insulated or properly earthed;
- (iv) Provide suitable personal protective equipment such as insulating gloves and insulating mats for employees; and
- (v) If live electrical work is unavoidable, a comprehensive risk assessment should be conducted by a competent person and the appropriate safety

precautions should be taken to remove or properly control the electrical hazards involved before such work can proceed.

In addition, employees should co-operate with the employer or contractor to follow the safety instructions and use the safety equipment provided.

The LD has published guidebooks and leaflets on electrical work safety. These safety publications are available free from divisional offices of the department or can be downloaded from its website (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/content2_8.htm).

Should there be any questions about occupational safety and health matters, please contact the Occupational Safety Officer of the LD at 2559 2297.

Public urged to report flooding

Attention duty announcers, radio and TV stations:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible and repeat it at suitable intervals:

Members of the public are advised to report any street flooding that comes to their notice to the Drainage Services Department by calling the 24-hour drainage hotline on 2300 1110.

Flag-lowering ceremony cancelled

Â Â Â Â Â Owing to the thunderstorm warning, the flag-lowering ceremony to be conducted at Golden Bauhinia Square, Wan Chai at 6pm today (July 14) will be cancelled.

Â Â Â Â Â If the thunderstorm warning is cancelled and weather conditions permit by then, the flag-lowering ceremony may be resumed without further notice.