

Health risk category for Air Quality Health Index may reach "Serious" level

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded a gradual increase in pollution levels since this morning. According to the EPD forecast, it is expected that the AQHI at some general and roadside air monitoring stations may reach the "Serious" level later today (November 18).

The weather in Hong Kong today is mainly fine and dry, but hazy, with moderate northerly winds. Higher than normal levels of particulates have been recorded in the territory since this morning. Hong Kong is under the influence of a high background pollution airstream. The sunshine enhances photochemical smog activity and the rapid formation of ozone and fine particulates in the Pearl River Delta region. The high level of ozone has also promoted the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, a cold front over inland Guangdong is moving southwards gradually. It is expected to move across the coastal areas tonight and the winds will strengthen. It is expected that pollution levels will improve 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 are 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 2827 8541.

2019 District Council Ordinary Election poll cards mailed to about 4.13 million electors

The 2019 District Council Ordinary Election will be held on November 24 (Sunday). The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) has mailed poll cards to about 4.13 million registered electors to inform them of where they should cast their votes on the polling day.

"Some of the polling stations used in previous elections were not available due to various reasons, so the REO therefore needed to identify other venues for polling stations. As such, some electors need to vote in polling stations different from those in previous elections. Electors are reminded to open and read carefully the mail from the REO, and to go to the designated polling station. Electors can only cast their votes at the polling station as specified on their poll card," a spokesman for the REO said today (November 18).

"Electors can log in to the Online Voter Information Enquiry System (www.voterinfo.gov.hk) if they have not yet received their poll card to check the name and address of the designated polling station, its location on the map and other polling information such as the polling date and polling hours. They can also call the election hotline (2891 1001) for enquiries," he said.

In addition to the poll card, the electoral mail sent by the REO to each elector also includes a map indicating the location of the designated polling station, a voting procedure guide, an introductory leaflet on the candidates of the constituency, and an ICAC publicity leaflet on clean elections.

"Electors must carry the original of their Hong Kong identity card or other specified alternative documents to the designated polling station to collect their ballot papers to cast their votes," the spokesman said.

Over 610 ordinary polling stations and 23 dedicated polling stations will be open on the polling day. The polling hours for the ordinary polling stations and the three dedicated polling stations set up at police stations will be from 7.30am to 10.30pm. For the 20 dedicated polling stations set up at penal institutions, for security reasons, the polling hours will be from 9am to 4pm.

Once the poll closes, most ordinary polling stations will be converted

into counting stations for counting of votes. The counting stations will be open to the public once the conversion has been completed. Members of the public will be able to watch the counting process at designated areas inside the counting stations.

Measures have been taken by the REO to enable electors with special needs to exercise their right to vote. "In the election, about 95 per cent of the polling stations are accessible to electors with mobility difficulty or those who use wheelchairs. Where possible, the REO will install temporary ramps at polling stations to assist them," the spokesman said.

The location map enclosed with the poll card specifies clearly whether the designated polling station is accessible to electors who are wheelchair users or have mobility difficulty.

"Electors with mobility difficulty or those who use wheelchairs may apply to the REO by tomorrow (November 19) (i.e. at least five days before the polling day) through the election hotline (2891 1001), fax (2891 1180) or email (reoeng@reo.gov.hk) for re-allocation to another polling station in case they have been allocated to a polling station inaccessible to them. If possible, the REO will also arrange for rehab buses to take them to and from polling stations upon request," he added.

On the other hand, the Electoral Affairs Commission encourages candidates to provide a text version of their introduction to enable electors with visual impairment to understand the content using software aids. The text versions provided by candidates have been uploaded to the election website (www.elections.gov.hk). Electors with visual impairment may also listen to the candidates' introductions by calling the dedicated 24-hour Interactive Voice Response System (2893 3762). Braille templates will be provided at polling stations to assist electors with visual impairment to vote.

To help electors who are not familiar with Chinese and English cast their votes, guides on the voting procedure in nine other languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Punjabi, Japanese and Korean) will be available at every polling station. Information on the election in these languages has also been uploaded to the election website.

The REO has also made arrangements with the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents run by the Hong Kong Christian Service to provide a telephone simultaneous interpretation service with seven languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Thai, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Punjabi) on election matters from November 11 to 15 and from November 18 to the polling day.

A pictorial guide showing the voting procedure will also be provided at polling stations to help electors with hearing or communication problems and electors who are not familiar with Chinese and English to understand the voting procedure. The pictorial guide showing the voting procedure has been uploaded to the election website (www.elections.gov.hk).

Information about the election is available on the election website (www.elections.gov.hk). For enquiries, please call the election hotline (2891 1001).

Service arrangements of methadone clinics today

The Department of Health today (November 18) announced that owing to the situations in Hung Hom and Yau Ma Tei, Hung Hom Methadone Clinic will not open today, and Yau Ma Tei Methadone Clinic will be closed earlier at 7pm. Those who have been receiving methadone treatments there can receive their daily doses at other methadone clinics.

Subject to the situation in other districts, the operating hours of other methadone clinics may also be adjusted today.

Please visit the following website for information on methadone clinics: www.dh.gov.hk/english/tele/tele_chc/tele_chc_mc.html.

Effective Exchange Rate Index

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Monday, November 18, 2019 is 106.1 (same as last Saturday's index).

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Saturday, November 16, 2019 was 106.1 (same as last Friday's index).

Temporary closure of some LCSD leisure and sports facilities

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (November 18) that the following leisure and sports facilities will be temporarily closed:

(a) Kwu Tung Grass Soccer Pitch in North District will be temporarily closed from November 20 to December 3 for turf maintenance works. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at North District Sports Ground or Fanling Recreation Ground in the same district.

(b) The multi-purpose arena at Fu Heng Sports Centre in Tai Po District will be temporarily closed from December 9 to February 27, 2020, for replacement works of sports flooring, while other facilities will remain open. During the closure period, the public may use similar facilities at Fu Shin Sports Centre, Tai Wo Sports Centre, Tai Po Sports Centre or Tai Po Hui Sports Centre in the same district.

For the most up-to-date closure schedules of the above leisure and sports facilities, the public may refer to the notices at the venues or contact venue staff directly.