

Top health authority urges stronger maternal safety measures



Ma Xiaowei, deputy head of the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC) [File photo/Baidu]

The state health authority Thursday urged the strengthening of maternal safety to reduce maternal and infant mortality.

At present, and for the foreseeable future, the number of older women becoming pregnant and higher risk pregnancies will continue to increase, according the National Health and Family Planning Commission (NHFPC).

According to the commission, 18.46 million babies were born in China last year, an increase of 11.5 percent from 2015. More than 7.4 million babies were born from January to May, up 7.8 percent year on year.

In response to China's rapidly aging population, the country allowed married couples to have two children from 2016, ending the one-child policy implemented decades ago to rein in a surging population.

The commission said 60 percent of women eligible to have a second child are 35 years old or above. The number of older women becoming pregnant will exceed three million each year from 2017 to 2020.

This will result in an increased risk of complications in pregnancy and pose more challenges to obstetric and paediatric services.

"It is an arduous task to guarantee maternal and infant safety," said Ma

Xiaowei, deputy head of the NHFPC.

The commission called for stronger measures to guarantee maternal and infant safety, urged comprehensive screening and assessment of gestation period risks, and enhanced management and treatment of higher risk pregnancies.

The next step for the commission is to release a notice to improve maternal safety and launch an action plan.

“We will do whatever we can to guarantee the birth of healthy babies,” said Ma.

Heavy rain kills 2 in Guangxi, strands 9,000 in Sichuan

Two people are dead after rain-triggered floods left rivers swollen, inundating roads, houses and farms in south China’s Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

One of the casualties drowned while the other was killed by a collapsing house. More than 3,300 people have been relocated, according to the regional government’s civil affairs bureau.

The floods have affected 120,000 people and resulted in direct economic losses of 89.8 million yuan (13.2 million U.S. dollars).

In southwest China’s Sichuan Province, thunderstorms caused the province’s main airport, in the city of Chengdu, to be closed for an hour. About 50 outbound flights were canceled or delayed, while 40 inbound flights detoured to land at other airports.

The airport said more than 9,000 passengers have been stranded and the number of affected flights is likely to rise throughout the night as the thunderstorm continues.

The biggest risk to the UK economy is Theresa May’s Government – John

McDonnell

John

McDonnell MP, Labour's Shadow Chancellor, commenting on the Office for Budget Responsibility's (OBR) Fiscal Risks report this morning, said:

"The

Tories want to blame Brexit for their failures on the economy, but what this report really reveals is that one of the biggest risks to our economy is Theresa

May's weak government, and the last seven years of Tory economic failure.

"Given

recent poor economic news, showing a lost decade of productivity growth and falling real earnings, the risks highlighted today by the OBR of slower productivity growth, a persistent current account deficit, high level of household debt, and weak business investment are extremely worrying.

"The

OBR have today put the final nail in the coffin of Tory economic credibility. They have confirmed health spending has been falling

under the Tories, social care is in crisis and local authority budgets have been stripped to the bone. Rather than invest in our public services, the OBR notes this government's shambolic 'periodic policy reversals' while at the same

time giving away billions in tax breaks to the super rich.

"It

is a dereliction of duty of this government that the OBR can claim that after seven years of austerity, the British economy, and working people, are less prepared for the 50/50 risk of a recession in the next five years.

"Only

a Labour Government will negotiate a sensible jobs-first Brexit which does not

risk long-term damage to our economy and has set out a serious plan for the public finances. Labour's strategic investment will be underpinned by our Fiscal

Credibility Rule, to help build the high wage, high skill economy of the future

for the many not the few."

Press release: Yorkshire Water fined

£600,000 for polluting a Staithes watercourse with sewage sludge

Yorkshire Water has been fined £600,000 for polluting a Staithes watercourse with sewage that had leaked out from a poorly-maintained storage tank.

The company was sentenced on Thursday 13 July at Leeds Crown Court, after admitting one charge of causing a water discharge activity into Dales Beck, at Dalehouse, without an environmental permit.

The pollution originated from the firm's Hinderwell Waste Water Treatment Works in July 2015. It had leaked from a poorly-maintained, rusting sludge storage tank, which had holes in it.

Richard Bradley, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, told the court that the sewage had a significant impact on the quality of the water in the beck. The watercourse, which passes through a caravan park, was discoloured and had a foul odour. Up to 100 dead fish were seen, and water quality tests revealed high levels of ammonia and low dissolved oxygen levels.

Downstream, the pollution incident affected water quality in Staithes Harbour, which was a designated bathing water at the time. An 'abnormal situation' was declared for 17 days during the peak holiday season and Scarborough Council erected signs advising the public not to enter the water.

Yorkshire Water initially blamed works at the nearby Potash Mine for the water discolouration, but four days after the spill they used dye testing to trace the source back to the treatment works.

Sewage sludge could clearly be seen in the yard near the tank, and from there it had entered Dales Beck via a small ditch below the Sewage Works. Yorkshire Water did not immediately clean up the yard because it believed the sludge was contained on the site and would be recirculated back into its treatment process. However, the firm's own site user manual stated that the site drainage is not sealed. This was not picked up by the company and the sewage was in fact discharging into the watercourse.

The court heard that, as well as causing the pollution, Yorkshire Water also failed to act quickly in cleaning it up. In August, the Environment Agency asked the firm to provide a plan for how it was going to clean up the mess, but no reply was received. After further visits and correspondence, the company was still cleaning sewage sludge from the water on 19 October, some three months after the incident.

In sentencing, His Honour Judge Khokhar said the company had been reckless, rather than just negligent.

Claire Campbell, environmental planning specialist at the Environment Agency, said after the hearing:

This case demonstrates how important it is that water companies and wider industries maintain their equipment and facilities to a high standard in order to protect the environment. This pollution incident had a significant impact on the ecology of the watercourse, as well as an impact on the amenity of a caravan park and Staithes beach.

In mitigation, Yorkshire Water told the court that it had invested in measures to prevent the incident recurring. A gully guard had been installed to contain any future spillages within the site, and an alarm had been installed on the sludge tank. The tank has now been replaced.

The company was also ordered to pay £28,078.10 in legal costs.

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