

# China's Good Samaritan Law goes into effect

China's Good Samaritan law went into effect on Oct. 1 to protect people who are ready to help others.

Under the legislation, people who voluntarily offer emergency assistance to those who are, or who they believe to be, injured, ill, in danger, or otherwise incapacitated, will not have civil liability in the event of harm to the victims.

It aims to ease the reluctance people feel toward helping strangers for fear of legal repercussions if they make mistakes in treatment.

The legislation responds to the phenomenon of people refraining from assisting fallen senior citizens over concerns of being blackmailed later, said Wang Cheng, professor at Peking University Law School.

The law will reduce bystanders' hesitation to assist, said Wang.

In 2011, a two-year-old girl was run over by two cars, and 18 passersby did not offer emergency help. The girl died later after days of medical treatment.

In 2014, a man from south China's Guangdong Province aided a senior citizen but was accused of knocking him down. The man committed suicide when faced with demands for compensation.

"If you don't provide help, you will blame yourself, but if you do help, you are likely to be hurt by the people you help. It is really a dilemma," said one comment on China's microblog Sina Weibo.

These disputes have sparked debate about morality and heroism in the country in recent years.

"There is no need to discuss whether or not you should aid people in distress. Your help is a matter of life or death for the person who is injured," said Wang.

If a code of conduct is not enough to prevent unethical behavior, it is time for the law to address it, said Liu Jiehui, a judge with the Intermediate People's Court of Shenzhen City in Guangdong.

In 2012, China's State Council published a paper outlining ideas to help protect Good Samaritans that would provide preferential policies in employment and other fields.

Although there had been calls for a national Good Samaritan law, only a few cities pushed ahead with such legislation before the nationwide law came into effect.

In 2013, Shenzhen said anyone who wants to claim compensation needs to collect evidence first.

Shanghai in 2016 enacted a policy that protects the public from liability during rescues and rescue attempts.

The national Good Samaritan law underwent three amendments from December 2016 to March 2017 before it was introduced in October.

The nationwide Good Samaritan law will help create a better social atmosphere for helping others, said Liu.

Some experts are concerned that there will be some danger from a nationwide Good Samaritan law.

“Rescuers who know little about medical treatment could bring serious harm to people in critical condition,” said Yang Lixin, a professor with the Renmin University of China.

He hoped the government could introduce details of the policy soon while encouraging people to voluntarily offer assistance.