

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

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal pollution levels in the past few days and the situation is expected to continue in the next couple of days. According to the EPD's forecast, the AQHI of today (September 30) and tomorrow (October 1) may reach the "Serious" level at some general and roadside air quality monitoring stations.

Over the past few days, Hong Kong was under the continued influence of a high background pollution airstream with fine and hot weather. The sunshine enhanced photochemical smog activity and the rapid formation of ozone and fine particulates in the Pearl River Delta region. The high level of ozone also promoted the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, the weather in the next few days will remain mainly fine with light to moderate westerly to southwesterly winds or light winds, and a strong easterly airstream will affect the coast of Guangdong over the weekend and early next week. It is expected that air pollution will remain at high levels until the advent of the easterly airstream.

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.aqi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.