

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

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal pollution levels since yesterday afternoon (September 15). According to the EPD's forecast, it is expected that the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at some general and roadside air quality monitoring stations may reach the "Serious" level later today (September 16). The air pollution levels are expected to remain higher in the next two days.

The weather in Hong Kong is mainly fine, very hot and hazy during the day, with light to moderate west to northwesterly winds, which is bringing an airstream with high regional ozone and particulate background pollutant concentrations and is unfavourable for pollutant dispersion. The intense 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 promoted the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, a broad area of low pressure will bring unsettled weather early next week. It is expected that air quality 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 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.aqhi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.