

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

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) forecasted that the health risk category of the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at some air quality monitoring stations may reach the "Serious" level later today (September 30).

The EPD has recorded higher-than-normal air pollution levels in some areas since last Thursday afternoon (September 26). Under the influence of the outer subsiding air of tropical cyclone Krathon, the weather today is fine and very hot with moderate northwesterly winds. Weak winds are unfavourable for pollutant dispersion. The intense sunshine enhances photochemical smog activity, leading to the rapid formation of ozone and fine particulates in the Pearl River Delta region. The high ozone level also promotes the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, a fresh to strong northeast monsoon will reach the coast of Guangdong tomorrow (October 1). Under its influence, winds along the coast of Guangdong will strengthen in the middle part of this week. It is expected that air quality 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 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 healthcare 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 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 on the EPD's website (www.aqi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.