

Health risk category for Air Quality Health Index reaches "Serious" level

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recorded higher than normal pollution levels since noon today (January 26). At 7pm, the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI) at the Tuen Mun general monitoring station reached 10+, corresponding to the "Serious" health risk category.

Hong Kong is under the influence of a high-pollution background airstream, and the weather was fine with light winds in the afternoon. The light wind hindered the effective dispersion of air pollutants. 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 has also promoted the formation of nitrogen dioxide.

According to the Hong Kong Observatory, a fresh easterly airstream will affect the coast of Guangdong tomorrow (January 27). It is expected that the air pollution level will remain higher than normal until the advent of stronger wind.

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 are 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 the 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 at the EPD's website (www.aqhi.gov.hk/en.html) or by calling the hotline 2827 8541.