

# Labour Department releases revised “Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms”

The Labour Department (LD) today (June 3) released the newly revised "Code of Practice (CoP) in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms". The CoP aims at alerting employers to consult employees as soon as possible on the work and resumption of work arrangements in times of adverse weather conditions before typhoon season. The revised CoP also provides reference guidelines to employers and employees on the work and resumption of work arrangements in the event of the Government issuing the new post-super typhoon "extreme conditions" announcement.

Following the experience with Super Typhoon Mangkhut last year, the Government conducted an inter-departmental review of the handling mechanism to improve the city's preparedness, emergency response and recovery efforts. One of the new measures is, if the situation warrants, the Government may issue an "extreme conditions" announcement before Typhoon Warning Signal No. 8 (T8) is replaced with No. 3 (T3). "Extreme conditions" may include serious disruption of public transport services, extensive flooding, major landslides or large-scale power outage occurring after a super typhoon.

Upon the announcement of "extreme conditions" by the Government, apart from essential staff who have an agreement with their employers to be on duty when "extreme conditions" is in force, employees are advised to stay at the place they are currently in for two hours after cancellation of T8, instead of heading for work immediately. The Government will review the situation, and further advise the public by the end of the two-hour period whether the "extreme conditions" period will be extended or cancelled. During the period, employers and employees should stay alert to further government announcements. Once the "extreme conditions" period is over, employees should follow the work arrangements they have previously agreed with the employers and resume work as appropriate. If employees are unable to report for duty due to practical difficulties, they should notify their supervisors as soon as possible. Employers are also advised to be sympathetic and make flexible arrangements for their employees under such circumstances.

"To maintain smooth operations and good labour-management relations, it is of utmost importance for employers to draw up in advance, in consultation with their employees, realistic and practical work arrangements in times of and after typhoon and rainstorm warnings, post-super typhoon 'extreme conditions' and other adverse weather conditions," an LD spokesman stressed.

"When implementing the work arrangements, employers should adopt a sympathetic and flexible approach, according top priority to employees' safety at all times. Due consideration should also be given to the individual circumstances of employees. In drawing up the work arrangements for adverse

weather conditions, employers should conduct realistic assessment on the need for essential staff and keep the staff number to a minimum as far as possible. Employees identified as essential staff should be notified in advance.

"Employers should discuss with essential staff in advance the arrangements for their transportation, meals and rest places, as well as other contingency safety measures under adverse weather conditions. They should also explain clearly to employees the calculation methods of working hours, wages, duty and travel allowances under different scenarios. Employees' wages, allowances and good attendance bonuses should not be affected if they are not required to report for duty in accordance with the work arrangements," the LD spokesman added.

It is incumbent upon employers to observe the statutory obligations and requirements under the Employment Ordinance, the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance.

Prime consideration should be given to the safety of essential staff at all times, with adequate safety facilities, personal protective equipment and suitable rest breaks provided for them during working hours. Employers should grant extra duty allowance to essential staff required to work in adverse weather or when an "extreme conditions" announcement is in force.

On work resumption arrangements, as employees' journeys to workplaces may be hindered in the aftermath of adverse weather, employers should exercise flexibility and give prime consideration to employees' safety at all times. If workplaces are damaged by adverse weather posing potential safety risks, employers should immediately carry out safety inspections and adopt suitable safety measures before arranging for employees to resume work.

To promote the community's understanding of the revised CoP and "extreme conditions" after super typhoons, the LD will step up publicity efforts for employer associations, workers' unions and human resources practitioners, including conducting briefings for them. TV and radio Announcements in the Public Interest on the subject will also be launched in the coming months. The revised CoP booklet can be downloaded from the LD's website ([www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf](http://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf)).