

Make work arrangements for and after typhoons and rainstorms

The Labour Department (LD) today (July 18) reminded employers to make practical and reasonable work arrangements for staff in times of typhoons and rainstorms, including resumption of work after the typhoon warning is cancelled. This would help maintain good labour-management relations, and ensure the safety of employees and the smooth operation of the organisations.

"For staff who have practical difficulties in resuming work promptly upon cancellation of a typhoon or rainstorm warning, employers should give due consideration to the circumstances of individual employees and handle each case flexibly," an LD spokesman said.

"As typhoons and rainstorms are natural calamities that cannot be avoided, employers should not deduct wages or allowances of employees who are absent from or late for work because of inclement weather. Neither should employers dismiss an employee summarily based on these grounds," he said.

The spokesman also reminded employers to observe the statutory liabilities and requirements under the Employment Ordinance, the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, the Employees' Compensation Ordinance and the Minimum Wage Ordinance.

Employers should not deduct the annual leave, statutory holidays or rest days employees are entitled to under the Employment Ordinance so as to compensate for the loss of working hours resulting from employees' failure to report for duty upon the issue of Typhoon Signal No. 8 or the announcement of a Black Rainstorm Warning. An employer who without reasonable excuse fails to comply with relevant provisions under the Employment Ordinance is liable to prosecution.

Employers should also note that they have an obligation to maintain a safe workplace for their employees under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance.

Under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, employers are liable to pay compensation for death or injury incurred when employees are travelling by a direct route from their residence to their workplace, or from workplace back to residence after work, four hours before or after working hours on a day when Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above or a Red or Black Rainstorm Warning is in force.

To provide practical guidelines and samples of work arrangements for the reference of employers and employees, the LD has issued the booklet "Code of Practice in times of Typhoons and Rainstorms". The code can be obtained from the branch offices of the Labour Relations Division or downloaded from the department's webpage (www.labour.gov.hk/eng/public/wcp/Rainstorm.pdf).