Introduction

Each year, Hong Kong experiences typhoons, rainstorms and thunderstorms between mid-spring and mid-autumn, and strong monsoon winds in summer and winter. These adverse weather conditions may cause accidents at workplaces.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Chapter 509) and Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Chapter 59), employers/proprietors have the obligation to ensure the safety and health of their employees at work. Meanwhile, employees have the duty to take care of themselves, as well as others, and to co-operate with their employers/proprietors to comply with the safety requirements.

Where employees are required to work during inclement weather, their employers/proprietors should ensure that all risks are eliminated or effectively reduced to the minimum.

This guide aims to enhance the safety awareness of both employers/proprietors and employees, with a view to avoiding accidents at workplaces in times of inclement weather.

Work Hazards in times of Inclement Weather

Inclement Weather may create danger to people working outdoors, especially in exposed areas. Sometimes, people working in covered structures or indors may also be affected.

Serious or even fatal accidents may occur at workplaces under inclement weather conditions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of hazards</th>
<th>Strong wind</th>
<th>Lightning</th>
<th>Persistent rain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclement weather</td>
<td>Typhoons</td>
<td>Thunderstorms</td>
<td>Rainstorms</td>
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<tr>
<td>Possible Consequence</td>
<td>Collapse of temporary structures or plants causing injury to people nearby and damage to property.</td>
<td>Electric shock or electrocution to people directly or through conductive objects. Loss of body balance resulting in falls. Flying or falling objects.</td>
<td>Electric shock or electrocution due to leakage of current from wet electrical equipment. Shorting arising from wet floor surface. Striking of tools, equipment, or articles in motion. Flooding leading to drowning and damage to plants or structures. Landslide as a result of percolated heavy rainfall. Collapse of roads.</td>
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Safety Precautions

Before Commencement of Work

1. Conduct risk assessment on working under inclement weather conditions, identify and analyse the hazards.
2. Formulate safety plan and emergency plans with documented procedures on communication of weather information, traffic arrangements, work suspension, evacuation, use of safety equipment and facilities and back up services, etc.
3. Formulate training programme and provide training to employees on hazards, and thus precautions, in inclement weather conditions.
4. Appoint an overseer to monitor changes in weather conditions likely to affect the safety of employees.
5. Install appropriate warning system, such as anemomter and lightning warning system, with regard to the nature of work to give employees real time warning to take appropriate measures.
6. Provide safe shelters or structures that can protect employees from the adverse effects of strong wind, lightning and rainstorm.
7. Cranes and other tall lifting appliances should be properly bonded to earth for protection from lightning.
8. Provide communication system, radios, and appropriate personal protective equipment for use by employees who have specific duties in times of inclement weather.
9. Provide safe means of transport and route for evacuation to safe shelters in the event of adverse weather conditions.

Upon receiving Warning Signals during Work

1. In the event of warnings issued by the Hong Kong Observatory, follow the established safety procedures.
2. Suspend immediately all outdoor work in exposed areas where employees are liable to be endangered by the adverse weather conditions such as rainstorms, thunderstorms and typhoons. Employees should take shelter in safe places.
3. Inspect indoor workplaces and consider suspension of those work that cannot be performed safely.
4. Listen to the latest weather broadcasts issued by the Hong Kong Observatory and prepare for immediate evacuation from the workplace.

After Cancellation of Warning Signals

1. Assess the effects of adverse weather conditions on the workplace and prohibit entry into areas that are still dangerous.
2. Listen to weather broadcast and maintain the highest alertness to possible renewal of thunderstorms, rainstorms and typhoons shortly after the cancellation or diminishing of the warning signal.
3. Resume work only after a thorough examination to ensure the safe working condition of lifting appliances, scaffolds, suspended working platforms, electrical installations, and other plant.