

## Fire Danger Warning

On average, over ten thousand fire incidents occur in Hong Kong every year, killing or injuring more than 600 people. Most of the fires are caused by carelessness or negligence. For example, the number of hill fires increases by 50% on weekends and public holidays, as more people visit the rural areas and the countryside.

Fire precautions should be taken all the year round, but the fire risk is particularly high in the dry conditions of autumn and winter.

Under the influence of dry continental air brought by the northeast monsoon, humidity level in Hong Kong is relatively low during the autumn and winter months. Things become dry both indoors and outdoors, leading to a higher chance of fire outbreaks. The situation is aggravated if there is a prolonged period of sunshine. Under such circumstances, fires can easily start and spread, causing extensive damage.

It is vitally important for the public to be extra vigilant during these periods of enhanced fire risks. Steps should be taken to minimize the risk of fire ignition that may lead to tragic losses of lives and costly damage to properties.

### Fire Danger Warning System

The Fire Danger Warning System aims at alerting the public to conditions in which fires may start and spread easily. The chance of fire outbreaks when fire danger warnings are issued is much higher than the average.

There are two levels of warning: Yellow and Red. The Yellow Fire Danger Warning will be issued when the fire risk is high; the Red Fire Danger Warning will be issued when the fire risk is extreme. The issuance of warnings are based on: (a) weather conditions favouring the occurrence and spread of fires, such as low humidity and high wind speed; and (b) information on the dryness of vegetation supplied by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

When the fire danger warnings are issued, warning messages are broadcast on radio, television and Internet to remind the public to take necessary fire precautions. Warning icons designed by the Observatory will be displayed on the TV screen.

The Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department will use "fire-clocks" mounted at the main entrances to country parks to display the warnings to visitors and hikers during the period of the country parks fire season.

The Fire Services Department will also display the warnings on warning boards posted in front of fire stations to alert the general public.

## **Fire precautions**

- Light fires only in designated barbecue sites or camp sites. Never leave a fire unattended; and extinguish all fires before you leave.
- Never burn off rubbish or weeds when there is a strong wind.
- Handle and dispose of cigarettes and matches with care.
- Only burn joss sticks and "paper money" in containers.
- Do not overload the electricity circuit by using too many plugs and appliances.
- Do not leave the stove in use unattended.
- Do not block the fire exit. Ensure that the fire door is always kept closed.
- Familiarize yourselves with the route of the fire exit as well as the operation of fire fighting facilities.
- Dial 999 to report fires promptly.
- If you see a hill fire nearby, keep calm. Note the direction in which the fire spreads, avoid escaping in the same direction as the prevailing wind. Find a place with less vegetation and choose a path which is easiest for escape. It is easier and quicker to escape through existing paths.
- If a Yellow or Red Fire Danger Warning is in force, be extra alert, take extra care, and make extra effort to ensure that the above precautions are taken due attention.