

## Hong Kong Observatory cancels all typhoon signals as winds ease and Tropical Storm Lionrock moves away from the city

- Lasting 22 hours, Lionrock became the single longest No.8 typhoon signal since 1978
- At 5am on Sunday, Lionrock was centred about 610km west-southwest of Hong Kong

Published: 10:05am, 9 Oct, 2021

<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/society/article/3151748/hong-kong-typhoon-buses-ferries-suspended-tropical-storm>



Firefighters clear away fallen tree branches on Eastern Street in Sai Ying Pun on Sunday. Photo: Jonathan Wong

Forecasters cancelled all typhoon signals on Sunday afternoon as the winds and rain that had battered Hong Kong over the weekend eased and Tropical Storm Lionrock moved further away from the city.

The Hong Kong Observatory announced the move at 2.20pm and said local winds were “moderating significantly”. Earlier, the first No 8 alert of the year was lowered after being in force for almost 24 hours.

And while Sunday’s weather was predicted to remain rainy and windy – prompting an Observatory spokesman to urge the public to stay away from the shoreline – the outlook for the next couple of days is mainly fine and dry.

The respite is not set to last, however, with heavy rain and squalls predicted for Tuesday as Tropical Storm Kompas moves into the area.



People took the opportunity to walk along the Central and Western District Promenade after the wind and rain eased on Sunday. Photo: Jonathan Wong

On Saturday, residents took refuge in their homes as sheets of rain and fierce winds brought by Tropical Storm Lionrock hammered Hong Kong without stopping on Saturday and triggered the first No 8 typhoon warning of the year.

From the downtown business core to luxury retail districts, streets usually packed with weekend shoppers were largely deserted, while most public services, from schools to medical clinics, never opened for the day after the Observatory issued the third-highest storm alert at 6.40am.

The No 8 typhoon warning was downgraded to a No 3 signal at 4.40am on Sunday.

Lasting 22 hours, Lionrock became the single longest storm 8 signal since Severe Tropical Storm Agnes of July 1978, according to Observatory records.

The residents who did brave the harsh conditions on Saturday struggled to find transport. Ferry services were suspended, while rail operator MTR Corporation stopped its buses and said its trains would run on a reduced timetable. Franchised bus operators NWFB, Citybus, KMB and LWB halted runs early in the morning except for a handful of routes.



A girl plays in the rain in Tsim Sha Tsui. Photo: May Tse

According to the Hospital Authority, 13 people had sought medical treatment at public hospitals as of 10pm.

Officials said all community vaccination centres, which were closed on Friday afternoon when heavy rains began to batter the city, would remain shut until three hours after the No 8 signal was cancelled, which was not expected until after midnight.

The closure of community vaccination centres meant people with bookings would have to reschedule, while all mobile stations for collecting coronavirus samples, as well as community testing centres, were also shut.

The Department of Health suspended collection points for deep-throat saliva samples at 10 designated chest or dermatological clinics. Of all the clinics under the department, only methadone facilities remained open.



A staff member walks through the largely deserted IFC shopping centre on Saturday. Photo: Xiaomei Chen

Authorities said 121 people had sought refuge at 21 temporary shelters. As of 10pm, the 1823 government call centre had received 165 reports of fallen trees, and the Drainage Services Department confirmed two cases of flooding, while the Civil Engineering and Development Department received three reports of landslides.



A man gets close to the ocean as Tropical Storm Lionrock batters Hong Kong Photo: Dickson Lee

The Labour Department reminded employers to consider alternative arrangements for staff, such as working from home.

Businesses across the city were closed, and while the IFC shopping centre in Central was open, there were few shoppers around.

The usually busy Sun Yat Sen Memorial Park in Sai Ying Pun was also quiet, although some hardy residents were exercising in the heavy wind and rain before finally calling it quits when conditions grew worse.

Similarly, the Kwun Tong Promenade in Kowloon, usually bustling with joggers and families out enjoying the harbour views, was empty and nearby shops and restaurants closed.

Ocean Park on southern Hong Kong Island and its new Water World attraction remained shut for the day.

The storm also forced shut: welfare service units of the Social Welfare Department; child care centres; centres providing after school care programmes; elderly services centres and day rehabilitation units including sheltered workshops; integrated vocational rehabilitation services centres; integrated vocational training centres; and day activity centres. Those services will only resume two hours after the signal is cancelled.

Macau issued its No 8 tropical cyclone warning at 6am on Saturday, and the signal was expected to remain in place for the rest of the night.

The severe conditions also hampered work on clearing scaffolding that collapsed at the private Beverly Hill estate on Broadwood Road in Happy Valley on Friday, killing one construction worker and leaving three others trapped. The torrential downpours prompted the Observatory to upgrade its rainstorm warning to black, the top-level warning, on Friday morning, which was downgraded before it was taken down at 7.25pm.

Forecasters came under fire for failing to issue a more serious rainstorm signal in the morning.

Many parents criticised the Observatory and the Education Bureau for only shutting kindergarten classes before the black rainstorm signal was issued, leaving the rest of the student population exposed to the harsh weather.

The Observatory said that Lionrock was the most distant tropical storm that triggered a No 8 signal since 1961.

While the strength of the storm used to be rare at this time of year, it has become more common, with the warning raised in October last year and during the same month in 2016 and 2017.