

Tzu Chi Sets Up Relief Centers at Approach of Typhoon Saola

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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As Typhoon Saola approached Taiwan, the Tzu Chi Foundation set up disaster response co-ordination centers around the island, manned 24 hours a day and with stocks of food, blankets and daily necessities.

After killing 23 people and forcing 154,000 from their homes in the Philippines, Saola hit the island early on Thursday, bringing torrential rain that could last until next week. Schools were closed and many air and train services cancelled. It is a category 2 typhoon on a scale of five.

The branch offices set up the centers on July 31, with the command center in Hualien, the headquarters of the foundation. It is co-ordinating the deployment of volunteers and materials, according to the needs of the situation. The centers are manned around the clock and will provide relief demanded by those in need. People are asked to contact the command center at this number:

Tel: (03) 8059966 or (03) 8266779, ext: 373, 374, 590, 269.

In the early morning of August 2, Master Cheng Yen expressed her concern about the movement of Saola. "Although the direction of the typhoon has changed, everyone should take precautions. The typhoon has been weakened by geography but everyone should remain on high alert, no matter where you are, in the north, center, south or east of Taiwan. There will still be a chance of heavy rain. Please do not take it lightly. I am worried about it," she said.

The Foundation has prepared 2,500 eco-blankets, 5,000 packs containing daily necessities and 10 tons of instant rice for emergency use.

At the Jing Si Abode, the command center is following the situation closely. The branch offices around Taiwan are reporting to it; all are safe. In Hualien, some residents of mountainous areas have been evacuated. Tzu Chi volunteers are in permanent contact with local government offices and will provide relief aid if needed.

Yesterday, in Taichung and Pingtung, while the weather was still stable, volunteers visited the elderly who live alone and the foundation's care recipients and reminded them to stay on high alert.

In the afternoon of August 1, volunteers in Hualien prepared and shipped 50 boxes of instant noodles and instant rice by train to Luodong in Yilan County, for emergency use. The station master and volunteers at Hualien Railway Station worked together to carry the material onto the train. When it arrived at Luodong station, tourists from China saw what Tzu Chi was going; they stepped forward to assist the volunteers in unloading the goods off the train and also made donations.

Dharma Master Cheng Yen reminded everyone to stay on high alert and pray sincerely. Every

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household needs to work on disaster prevention and reduce to the minimum any possible losses.