



Keynote Address by Mrs CHENG WAN, Irene Assistant Director of Housing (Development and Procurement)

A caring tradition—fostering site safety is in our DNA. Since the Site Safety Forum's inauguration in 2007, we have continued to build our relationship with the industry stakeholders in promoting a 'safety culture' through the platform of the Housing Department Site Safety Sub-committee, reaching a huge range of industry sectors including: construction, maintenance, property management services and cleaning services.

Give me two minutes to look back on some of the highlights of our quest to drive best practices home. In 2007 we signed the "Partnering for a Site Safety Charter". In 2008 we piloted "Safety Climate Index surveys" and the "Safe and Healthy Estate Accreditation" scheme, launching a mechanism for "voluntary and direct notification of hazardous repair, maintenance, alteration and addition (RMAA) works" and published a Site Safety Handbook. In 2009 we promoted best practices for tower crane-lifting safety, working at height with ladders and mobile working platforms, and safe home safe work. In 2010 we signed the "Planning and Design for Safety Charter", issued a Pictorial Guide to Planning & Design for Safety, fostered the safe working cycle, safety for cleaning operations at height, and compiled the Good Practice Promotion Kit for Tower Crane Lifting...among many other initiatives. Yes, we've definitely kept ourselves pretty busy!

In our key role as a major client, the Housing Authority is committed to a long-term strategy to promote best practices and foster a 'safety culture' through the systematic implementation of a 'three-pronged approach'. This covers three key areas: (1) procurement strategies; (2) performance monitoring mechanisms, and (3) contract requirements, research, training and publicity programmes.

As a result, over the years, we have seen huge improvements in terms of site safety standards and performance.

With the accident rate out-turn in our new works contracts down to an average of less than 10 per 1,000 workers in 2010, we have improved by about 50% over the last five years and by over 90% within the last ten years. Moreover, the average accident rate of under 8 per 1000 workers in our maintenance and improvement works contracts represents a decrease of over 40% in accidents over the last five years. While both figures compare very favourably with the industry average which stands at over 52 accidents per 1000 workers, the tragedy of a fatal case involving a worker suspected of falling from height during the course of lift-modernisation works highlighted the need to be ever vigilant with high-risk site activities.

Even one accident is one too many—hence our advocacy of "ZERO incident". To achieve this, the concept of "Safety First" must become part of our DNA—deeply embedded at every level within our own organisation and communicated to every contractor. On the procurement front, we have incorporated a scoring system for technical submissions that have incorporated safety considerations right from the tender stage for complex projects.



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We expect all stakeholders to give safety a top priority with full commitment to achieving zero incident in the workplace. Given the challenges today and ahead, we have made every effort to foster five key steps towards facilitating our contractors in implementing a safe system of work. These include: (1) assessing the task; (2) identifying the hazards; (3) defining safe methods; (4) implementing a safe system of work; and last, but not least (5) monitoring the system.

On a contract administration level, we have also sought to further strengthen safety specifications. Aside from mandating specific safety training requirements for contractors' site management and supervisory teams, since last year we have also introduced site safety training for our own resident site staff, works professionals and technical grade personnel engaged in new works projects. All of this has significantly enhanced the teams' core competencies in administering contracts. We have also further tightened management and physical safety measures in relation to tower-crane lifting, specified metal scaffolding for use in lift shafts and mandated on-site non-smoking policies.

Our motto is: prevention is always better than cure. To make this a reality, we strongly advocate planning and design for safety. With the aid of 4D-visualisation, we promote the use of BIM by all of our contractors so that project planning and construction procedures can be simulated right from the planning stage to enhance site planning, logistics and safety. Adoption of BIM also helps bridge communication gaps between the different parties involved in works projects.

Last year, we were proud to announce that the Lighthouse Club and the Construction Industry Council had awarded us the first Runner-up Prize (Client-Developer Category) in its Safety Leadership Award. Now it may not have escaped your notice that, in this field, we do tend to like building UP and reaching every higher goalposts. And this year, that's exactly what we did... when we received the Champion prize from the same source. This really bears testimony to our ongoing efforts to lift our safety regime to new heights and provide a model of leadership in the field that can motivate and inspire everyone who works with us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the videos to be shown immediately following my speech are about the "Safe System of Work" and the "Use of BIM to Enhance Planning and Design for Safety". After you've watched them, I encourage all of you to then really make use of this forum to share your experiences and learn from one another about best practices in the field. By sharing what you know and what you have learnt, safety in the workplace can be further enhanced.

Looking ahead, we will continue to engage practitioners including contractors, professional service providers, staff members and other stakeholders to promote best practices and closer collaboration between all the teams involved in works projects. I like to think of the word 'TEAM' as meaning: Together Everyone Achieves More. So with that in mind, let's work collaboratively in the Forum, as safe operations benefit everyone.

