

Key Note Address by Mr WONG Mung-wan, Acting Assistant Director (Development and Procurement), Housing Department

This year marks the sixth Site Safety Forum for Works Contracts and Property Services Contracts co-organised by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Council. The HA has all along been committed to taking forward subsidised public rental housing (PRH) programmes and the related services by embracing the four core values, namely "Caring", "Customer-focused", "Committed" and "Creative". We attach great importance to the safety of frontline personnel and do our utmost to ensure site safety through the operation of the supply chain.

By adopting a three-pronged approach which comprises: (1) Procurement Strategy and Performance Monitoring Mechanism with Incentives and Sanctions; (2) Enhanced Contract Requirements and Administration; and (3) Research, Training and Promotion in Collaboration with the Industry, the HA strives to encourage contractors to further uplift their safety performance in site management, improve the working environment at sites and strengthen safety training.

As regards the accident rate of New Works, the number of accidents per 1 000 workers fell from 37.8 in 2002 to 9 in 2011, indicating a remarkable drop of 76%. In 2011, we not only set a target to further reduce the site accidents per 1 000 workers from 15 to 12 but also established "Zero Incident" as a performance goal to alert site personnel at all levels to step up vigilance. This performance goal, among others, has also become an important message to be delivered at the Forum.

With the commencement of various major infrastructural projects and renovation works of old buildings, the construction industry is facing tough challenges particularly in the massive influx of newcomers, ageing of experienced workers, as well as serious wear and tear of plants and machineries. Moreover, the number of fatal accidents surged from 9 in 2010 to 23 in 2011, representing an increase of more than 100%. The situation is indeed a cause for concern.

In the face of the challenges, we will further enhance the safety level of the construction work cycle through making continuous improvement to the safety system. Noting that about one half of the fatal accidents involved the fall of persons from heights, we have published the "Practical Guide to Working at Height: Ensuring Safe Work Practices" in joint efforts with the expert members of the Housing Department Site Safety Sub-committee to provide useful reference in this particular aspect. Information on various safety issues has also been uploaded to the dedicated site safety website recently launched by the HA with a view to promoting best practices and safety awareness.

The new version of the Independent Safety Audit Scheme, which further encourages the application of the Safety System of Work to various daily site operations, will be adopted for New Works. As regards operations inside the lift shaft involving high risks, we will expand the scope of safety audit on lift projects to ensure the auditing of major risky operations during the installation of lifts. Moreover, we will also launch the Surprise Safety Inspection Programme to enhance daily site inspections on highly risky operations.

On the other hand, we have also reviewed the Integrated Pay for Safety, Environment and Hygiene Scheme and implemented enhanced measures so that contractors can be encouraged to achieve proper resource allocation, enhance management in a proactive manner, improve efficiency indicators, strengthen safety awareness, as well as to promote innovation on all aspects by adopting a target-based approach.

In view of the recent accidents involving mechanical failure of heavy machineries at sites, we have set up a Working Group on Site Safety of Heavy Machineries with members from the industry for working out proposals to improve mechanical safety.

Safe operation is a demonstration of wisdom, which derives from the lessons learnt from our experiences. To learn by reviewing past accidents is the best way to self-enlightening in our quest for a solution to a problem. The theme of today's forum is "Care for people, and light up our path to safety". The videos we are about to play will show various case reconstructions guiding us to learn from mistakes and reflect on the causes of the accidents so that we will raise our awareness and take precautionary measures.

Success can never be achieved by luck. Let us give our full dedication in fostering a safe and harmonious working environment.

incident

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