

Keynote Address by Mrs. Irene CHENG Assistant Director (Development and Procurement), Housing Department

The 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 (OSHC) has received immense support from the industry throughout all along. This year marks the eighth anniversary of the Forum. With the aim to provide an experience sharing platform for all players in the industry, every year the Forum will select a topic which deeply concerns the construction industry, thus worth candid and in-depth discussions. It is hoped that through this Forum, we can come up with inspirational ideas and proposals, so that bad practices can be rectified, and site accidents and fatalities be minimised.

As we all know, safety risk in the construction industry is the highest as compared with other trades and industries. This may be attributed to a number of factors, such as the high mobility and ageing problems in construction workforce, new comers not familiar with the operation modes, skills mismatch, malpractice contamination, multi-layered sub-contracting, the large number of projects undertaken, inadequate resources, deficiencies in management, the lack of safety awareness, etc. All these factors pose many difficulties to the management of front-line workers. Notwithstanding that morally and legally, contractors are duty bound to ensure safety at work, HA remains ready to impose more stringent contractual requirements to encourage contractors to aspire to higher occupational safety and health standards in the daily operation of worksites through various means.

Embracing the four core values of "Caring", "Committed", "Customer-focused" and "Creative", HA has been taking firm steps to raise the quality and safety standards on sites and promote best practices for upgrading the overall quality of project management in Hong Kong.

To this end, HA has adopted a three-pronged approach to promote site safety in a systematic manner, and the measures taken under this strategy in the past year were as follows-

- A. Procurement Strategy and Performance Monitoring Mechanism with Incentives and Sanctions
 1. Implement the Housing Authority Lift and Escalator Nominated Sub-contracts Safety Auditing System (HALENSAS).
 2. Implement the Surprise Safety Inspection Programme (SSIP).
 3. Review practicality of incorporating SSIP score index into the Performance Assessment Scoring System (PASS) and Integrated Pay for Safety Scheme.
 4. Enhance the interface among the Housing Authority Safety Auditing System, PASS and Integrated Pay for Safety Scheme.
 5. Establish the Occupational Injury and Disease Surveillance System.
- B. Strengthening Contract Requirements and Administration
 1. Implement the HALENSAS
 2. Launch the SSIP.
 3. Launch the caring programme for New Comers on Construction Sites with the introduction of "N" and "P" labels.
 4. Implement measures to protect workers from heat stroke.



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5. Enhance site safety measures for large panel formworks and working platforms.
6. Promulgate new specification clauses for overhaul requirements on major construction plant.
7. Promulgate revised specification clauses for personal protective provisions for contractors' site personnel and visitors.
8. Promulgate revised specification clauses for site safety training for contractors' site personnel.
9. Explore the permit-to-work system for using ladders.
10. Study the implementation of division of responsibility between contractors and sub-contractors regarding the provision of working platform on bamboo scaffolding.

C. Research, Training and Promotion

1. Study the use of common smartphone applications to improve site management of contractors, enhance project monitoring and reporting carried out by HA's site supervisory staff, and facilitate the exchange of information.
2. Implement the revised package of site safety training programmes for HA's resident site staff.
3. Upload safety & health circulars onto the Housing Authority Site Safety Website each month to alert industry practitioners on safe work practices, and enhance the website to comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines requirements.
4. Organise site safety seminars.

Following the adoption of the three-pronged approach, the accident rate for new works sites has dropped from 32.8 accidents per 1 000 workers in 2003 to 7.3 accidents per 1 000 workers in 2013, representing a drastic decrease of 78%. Nevertheless, we are never complacent and understand that there are challenges lying ahead. Frontline workers and managers at all levels have to continue to do their utmost to improve site safety.

The theme of the forum this year is: "Risk Assessment is the Key to Site Safety". Although the construction industry involves numerous complicated and high-risk processes, I am confident that with proper risk assessments to identify potential hazards, comprehensive assessments of the risks of injuries or damages that can be caused by the hazards identified, and control measures to eliminate such risks or contain them to an acceptable level, the site accident rate can be further reduced.

I hope all of you can take the opportunity at this forum to share experiences and exchange views on site safety, thus achieving continuous improvement to construction safety in Hong Kong.

