

Message by Mr YING Yiu Hong, Stanley, JP Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Housing)



Mr YING Yiu Hong, Stanley
JP

I would like to thank all of you for joining us in the Site Safety Forum for Works Contracts and Property Services Contracts today, which is once again co-organised by the Housing Authority (HA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), and also for sharing your views and experience on the best practices for safety.

As an organisation devoted to caring the society, HA has all along been working with its business partners to promote a safety culture at all tiers and provide a safe and healthy workplace for our staff and frontline workers, enabling the construction of quality housing and provision of effective estate management and maintenance services. We have the responsibility to ensure the safety of our staff and frontline workers at work, and even one accident is too many. Aiming for “zero fatal accident” as our safety target, we have spared no effort in keeping the accident rate per 1 000 workers down to less than 12 accidents. Through our continuous efforts over the years, we have achieved a high standard of safety performance on all HA's construction sites. In 2014, the accident rates on HA's sites were 6.4 accidents and 2.2 accidents per 1 000 workers for new works and maintenance works respectively, which are lower than the rates of 7.3 accidents and 4.1 accidents in 2013, and well below the overall accident rate of 42 accidents for the whole construction industry. We will continue to promote “zero incident” and improve our site safety performance.

We firmly believe that “quality” goes hand in hand with “safety”, and both are indispensable. Working on the mottos of “Safety first” and “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure”, we are adamant in taking pre-emptive measures, in particular process control, to ensure site safety. The theme of the forum this year is “Process Control Programme – Strictly Follow Work Procedures to Prevent Accident”. We can effectively strengthen safety management at work sites with stringent process control and systematic evaluation of work procedures from the perspective of risk management, in order to remove potential hazards and control risks well before exposing our workers to an undesirable working environment.

In view of the spate of serious accidents in the construction industry and the near-miss incidents involving lifting operations on HA's sites early this year, we must step up our vigilance immediately. To forestall further accidents, we have enlisted all our contractors in reviewing the safety standards of lifting and other high-risk operations, and to take initiatives to ensure that every process adheres to the procedures and guidelines.

I must emphasise that, although “lifting operation” and “welding” are under two separate sessions in this forum, both operations are common at work sites in new projects and maintenance projects. In fact, apart from these two types of operations, other high risk operations, such as working at height, large diameter bored piling works and underground excavation works etc., also require effective process control programmes. Owing to time limitation, we are only able to pick two relatively common operations and projects which have aroused recent concerns for in-depth discussions today. We are also glad to have colleagues from the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department with us to talk about the process control programme on “Avoidance of Damage to Underground Gas Pipes”.

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A "Pointing and Calling" Award was introduced this year to encourage contractors to include "pointing and calling" procedures in work process in order to help frontline staff strengthen their awareness and accuracy in work. "Pointing and calling" can remind workers to use their hands and minds at the same time, especially on high risk operations of new projects, and hence reduce negligence, error or misunderstanding related accidents. Meanwhile, we are striving to build a safe and healthy work environment through actively promoting the practices of keeping work sites neat and clean, and also being mindful of the provision of welfare facilities for workers.

Last but not the least, I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the Occupational Safety and Health Council, the supporting organisations, guest speakers as well as participants from industry for making this forum a success for the ninth consecutive year. We firmly believe that with the collaborative efforts made by both the management and frontline staff, we can surely make consistent enhancement on site safety standards and performances, and foster a safer and healthier working environment, thus aspiring for excellence in the construction, maintenance and management of public housing.



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