

Keynote Speech by Mr LUK Hing-chuen Assistant Director of Housing (Estate Management) (3)



Mr LUK Hing-chuen

As the largest landlord in Hong Kong, the Housing Authority (HA) provides accommodation to millions of people in the territory. Seeing that proper estate management as well as routine maintenance and repairs are closely related to people's daily lives, HA, being a responsible employer, hopes to work in partnership with the industry to improve site safety in estate management as well as in maintenance and improvement works.

Industrial accidents occurred one after another in Hong Kong lately. Just this year, we have at least one serious incident in every month, causing long-term suffering to the workers concerned and their families. It is noted that the number of industrial accidents relating to the maintenance and improvement works of public housing estates is on the rise.

In 2017, 13 industrial accidents occurred in HA maintenance works representing an accident rate of 4.2 accidents per thousand workers, which is below the industry average of 32.9 accidents per thousand workers. However, the number has increased when compared with the 5 accidents or the rate of 1.5 accidents per thousand workers in the previous two years. Of the 13 accidents, 3 each for slipping on step platform and finger injuries caused by clamping; and 2 each for slipping on level ground and calf or finger injuries caused by toppled objects. The rest are isolated cases of injuries while handling objects, injured by hand tools and injured by abrasive wheel, each category accounts for 1 case. Although most of these are just minor injuries, we should not take them lightly. As such, we hope to strengthen existing guidelines and add new measures through promotion and implementation of the three strategies on site safety.

The first strategy: Procurement strategy and performance monitoring mechanisms with incentives and sanctions

- On procurement strategy, we aim at improving the site safety performance of contractors by enhancing the zero-tolerance policy through including gondola operation as an assessment item against common bad practices.
- Early last year, we tightened the requirements of contractors on site safety by revising the weighting in the section of construction under Housing Authority Safety Auditing System. This year, we will review the existing installation and maintenance processes of lift and escalator, including the audit items and scoring standards, with a view to strengthening and enhancing safety awareness in such works.
- In addition, we will continue to implement the Pay for Safety Scheme.

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The second strategy: Strengthening contract requirements and administration

- Surprise Safety Inspection System for Building Works and the random check mechanism for improvement works will be continued to raise site safety standard.
- In the beginning of this year, a qualification requirement on bamboo scaffolding sub-contractors was introduced in district maintenance term contracts requiring the sub-contractors concerned to be certified under OSH Star Enterprise-RMAA Safety Accreditation Scheme. We hope to ensure work safety of high-risk activities through stringent safety audit and effective implementation of safety management system.
- We will continue to conduct safety audits regularly under Lift Modernisation Programme and Lift Addition Programme so as to monitor contractors' performance on site safety.
- We will continue to implement the Occupational Injury Alert and Warning Triggering System in all the property management service contracts, cleansing service contracts and security service contracts for safeguarding the occupational safety and health of workers. Through this system, we hope to remind contractors to enhance their safety management in workplace by showing their performance in this aspect on a regular basis, thus creating a safer working environment for employees.

The third Strategy: Continuous research, training and promotion of safety awareness

- The Estate Management Division has a plan in place to upgrade the existing Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems OHSAS 18001 to ISO 45001 so as to assess the performance of planned estate maintenance works on occupational safety and health in a more systematic manner and also to promote a safety culture in estates to improve the working environment.
- Contractors are encouraged to adopt a caring culture in their management and to organise more safety talks for the new comers.
- We will continue to work with the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) to explore ways to improve site safety.
- We will update the online courses on occupational safety and health and the Site Safety Handbooks, etc.

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- We have been promoting a rhythmical speech on Zero Tolerance for Gondola to draw workers' attention on the elimination of work hazards in a light-hearted manner.
- We will continue to hold safety meetings regularly with representatives from OSHC and Lift and Escalator Contractors Association for sharing information on safety and drawing the attention of various parties to site safety.

Accidents involving maintenance works happened in recent years, and some of them were fatal. Previously, we focused our efforts on safety measures relating to hardwares (e.g. the 4-leaf metallic gates of lifts and the counterweight for gondola ropes) as the main approach to eliminate hazards and minimise human error. However, it is "people" who actually carry out the works. Therefore, with the theme of this year's forum, we wish to explore ways to foster a caring culture to minimise or even prevent accidents and to ensure the safety of workers.

We hope that our contractors and business partners could adopt a caring culture in project management and that the staff and workers could actively look out for each other. With more reminders and care, we could raise workers' safety awareness and develop a safety culture, and eventually draw more and more people to join our cause. Last but not least, I call upon all our colleagues and business partners to join hand in building a safe and sound working environment.

Thank you!



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