

## **Keynote Speech by Ms Connie YEUNG** **Deputy Director of Housing (Development & Construction)**



*Ms Connie YEUNG*

### **“Caring Culture for Safe Work Practice — Safety Management of Site Practice in High Risk Activities”**

The Housing Authority (HA) has been co-organising the Site Safety Forum with the industry for 12 years since 2007. Here, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for the tremendous support over the years.

The annual Site Safety Forum provides an opportunity for members of the industry to exchange experiences in enhancing safety at workplace. The theme of this year’s forum is “Caring Culture for Safe Work Practice”. We have been promoting site safety in different ways, such as safety design, refining site management model and work process, upgrading safety devices and fostering a proper mentality towards safety, out of our care for the frontline staff and the objective to safeguard the safety and health of workers.

Embracing the belief of “Caring”, which is one of the 4 Cs of HA’s core values, we are dedicated to the promotion of construction safety. After years of efforts, the accident rate of HA new works per thousand workers has been maintained at single digit for many years. In 2017, the accident rate of HA new works per thousand workers was 6.9, which was broadly the same as the rate of 6.8 in 2016, and was below the target accident rate of 9 accidents as laid down in the Site Safety Strategy by HA and that of the local construction industry at 32.9 accidents per thousand workers in the same year.

HA has strived to maintain a record of zero fatal accident. However, in 2017, fatalities occurred in both local construction industry and HA new works. Two of which were recorded in HA new works and the total number of fatal accidents in the construction industry in Hong Kong increased to 22. Most of these accidents involved high-risk activities. Therefore we need to strengthen our efforts on different fronts to bring down the number of fatal accidents to zero.

One of the challenges faced by HA in improving site safety is the safety culture amongst workers. The number of workers on HA’s new works sites continues to increase and it reached around 13 000 in 2017. The new comers are not familiar with the dangers in construction works or construction sites. On top of this, our construction workforce is ageing while the volume of construction works remains at a high level resulting in a short supply of site supervisory staff. All these pose great challenges to site safety. HA has adopted a three-pronged safety management strategy to raise site safety standards by enhancing the procurement strategy and performance monitoring mechanism, strengthening contract requirements on the design of hardware and software, and making practical efforts on research, training and promotion of site safety awareness.

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About the first prong, which is procurement strategy, we have drawn up new requirements on the admission to HA's Counterparty Lists. Currently, works contractors who want to be included in the List are required to have the OHSAS 18001 certification. With the implementation of the ISO 45001 certification in Occupational Health and Safety Management System in 12 March 2018, works contractors must obtain ISO 45001 certification during the three-year transitional period. ISO 45001 adopts a risk management approach which puts emphasis on strategic planning, leadership and participation of workers.

On contract terms and management, which is the second prong, we have been exploring a series of enhancement measures for new works since late 2017. We are drafting contract requirements on Safety Climate Index to gauge frontline employees' awareness and acceptance of work safety and identify areas for improvement. The contractors concerned have to conduct a survey after a period of time to see if there is a rise in the index. Workers' behaviour is closely related to their safety performance on site. HA is drafting contract requirements on Work Safe Behaviour Programme to identify problems by observing workers' behaviour so that targets could be defined and suitable training could be provided.

The quality of safety supervisors is very important in monitoring site safety. We are going to implement a construction safety supervisor certification scheme under which safety supervisors will be required to possess qualifications accredited by the Hong Kong Safety and Health Certification Scheme under the Occupational Safety and Health Council. We will enhance safety elements in areas such as site management and machinery equipment with the help of technology. HA is drafting contract requirements on the application of RFID card reader system to machinery in new works contracts to ensure that the related machinery will be operated by approved staff to improve operational safety. RFID reader system is used to monitor and record access to high-risk areas, such as lift shaft where a guided-suspended working platform is used and specific enclosed areas at concealed locations. Tower crane lifting is a high-risk activity. We are drawing up measures to enhance the safety of tower crane operation and to prevent fall of objects. They include regular inspection, separate power supply for tower crane, CCTV surveillance systems in the operator's cabin, video surveillance camera at upper level of the crane, shift duty arrangement so that operators can take rest; and training programme for young operators etc. In recent years, HA has been developing the technology to report safety incidents through internet. We attach great importance to the accuracy and efficiency in reporting site incidents and accidents. It is anticipated that starting from August 2018, site contractors can use mobile phones to access the internet for reporting safety incidents. By the end of 2018, other mobile apps will also be launched which can help enhance site safety.



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With respect to the third prong relating to the fostering of a safety culture through research, training and promotion, the percentage of prefabrication in the construction of public housing continues to increase. We have been exploring the use of precast structural walls, precast lift shafts and modular housing construction to further reduce works at height and improve housekeeping on works sites. To align with the global trend and the development direction of the Government, we visited Singapore in 2017 to study their modular housing construction technology with a view to improving productivity and site safety. We have already started related technical studies in collaboration with contractors. We continue to promote the application of building information modelling (BIM) in the simulation of construction processes, identification of hazards, implementation of measures to eliminate or reduce risks, and site safety training on safe working practices for construction teams.

Cultivating safety awareness is very important. We have organised talks on safety, updated our safety website and issued safety alerts to raise frontline workers' vigilance of hazards; encouraged contractors to participate in occupational safety and health competitions through the Pay for Safety Scheme; and organised site safety award schemes to encourage our teams to enhance occupational safety and health.

The basic thing is, we should show the frontline workers and their families that we care about their wellbeing. Safety always comes first even when we have deadlines to meet. We shall never compromise when lives are at stake. Please bear in mind that,

“Caring from the Heart. Safety Habits at Ease.”

Here I would like to call upon all stakeholders of the industry to take further steps to enhance site safety so as to reduce the risks faced by workers. Last but not least, I hope that workers of various sectors can go to work with a happy mind and go home safely to see their families.

Thank you!