

## Message by Mr Tong Chi-keung, Donald, GBS, JP

This is the 14<sup>th</sup> Safety Forum organised by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) with our partners, the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) and the Construction Industry Council (CIC). We are also pleased to receive support from other members of Housing Department Site Safety Subcommittee and also industry stakeholders. We attach great importance to this annual event as it serves as a platform for the industry practitioners to share their latest news and practices on workplace safety and health. I am confident that our exchange of experience and sharing through this forum will help the industry further improve its occupational safety and health.



The theme of the Forum this year is “Risk Management to Safeguard Safety and Health of Workplace” with emphasis on high risk activities covering lifting operation, prevention of falling objects and regulating work at height. These work operations in construction works and property management may involve different personnel, equipment, materials, work processes and workplace environment but the risks arising from the work activities must be properly managed so as to protect the lives of the frontline personnel and also the public. The key to success in risk management depends on how we tackle the uncertainty. This is particularly true for the construction industry being one of the high-risk industries. To better promote the theme, we devise a catch phrase “Effective Risk Management - Key to Occupational Safety and Health” for the Forum this year.

We reckon that a risk management approach can effectively prevent the emergence of hazards, minimize the risk of injury and loss of property. Our works contractors and service providers are obliged to proactively identify the potential hazards in their works, assess their risks, formulate appropriate ways to avoid such risks and strictly implement risk control measures so as to safely complete the tasks without accident or incident. I trust we would all agree that risk management and measures are of paramount importance; and effective and comprehensive deployment of risk assessment could help us assess, predict and control risks.

With the concerted efforts of OSHC, CIC and stakeholders in the industry over the years, the industrial accident rates in the construction industry and HA works contracts have generally been declining. In 2019, the HA New Works achieved an accident rate of 5.2 accidents per one thousand workers, being the lowest in the past decade. One of the key reasons leading to this declining trend is the more rigorous risk management of site operations by our project teams and working partners. The accident rate of HA Maintenance Works also dropped to 5.3 accidents per one thousand workers, mainly owing to vigilance in improving safety awareness and promotion of safety caring management.

There is of course no room for HA to be complacent as we could hardly tolerate any construction accidents. HA is “committed” to continuously uplift safety standards through the supply chain. We adopt a three-pronged approach to reduce industrial accidents. Firstly, we will continue to improve our procurement strategies and performance monitoring mechanism to encourage our business partners to aspire to higher safety and health standards. Only competent and qualified contractors with satisfactory safety performance would be allowed to undertake HA works contracts. Secondly, we will continue to enhance our safety and health contractual requirements and management approaches, requiring the contractors and service providers to improve their safety management and provide a safe and healthy working environment for workers. Thirdly, we will actively invite our business partners to take part in the promotion activities and training programmes on work safety and health so as to foster a safety culture.

Achieving site safety requires commitment from and active involvement of all players. We will endeavour to help raise industry safety standards. We also expect all our business partners to walk an extra mile to protect the lives and health of the workers. Last but not least, I would like to, on behalf of the HA, thank all the guests of honour, speakers and friends from the industry present today again for your support to this annual event. Your participation gives us great encouragement in our efforts to provide a safe and healthy workplace for our workers.