



Assistant Director of Housing
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Message from
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You may be aware that one-third of the Hong Kong population reside in public rental housing. That is to say, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) is required to provide maintenance and management services for the housing units of one-third of the Hong Kong people. The effective operation and the provision of quality facilities for our housing estates rely much on the hard work of approximately 3 000 maintenance workers, 7 000 cleansing workers and 13 000 security guards. While frontline workers are working hard, both the HA and contractors have a duty to provide them with a safe working environment.

The HA has always been able to maintain a relatively low accident rate relating to estate maintenance works. When we look at the figures in the past two years, we find that there was one accident in 2020, representing an accident rate of 0.3 per thousand workers, while two accidents were recorded in 2021, representing an accident rate of 0.7 per thousand workers. As at the second quarter of this year, the accident rate per thousand workers is zero. When the HA is able to keep such a low accident rate, credit for this should go to members of the maintenance industry and the property management staff, who have followed safety practices strictly in each step of their daily work, and also put on suitable gears for protection. On behalf of the HA, I would like to particularly take this opportunity to thank you all for your past endeavours.

Accident prevention remains our priority. We will continue to adopt safety management measures, including requiring contractors to cite real-life cases of accidents relating to estate maintenance works and improvement suggestions as training materials. By providing training in a real-life setting and quoting injury cases as examples, we aim to raise the risk awareness among workers and help them develop greater competence in adopting safety procedures. Contractors must explain to their workers those real-life cases in detail in both induction and refresher courses.

It is our long-standing practice to require contractors to, pursuant to statutory requirements, hire a safety supervisor when the number of persons employed in a construction site is 20 or more. In recent years, we also asked contractors to engage safety supervisors accredited by the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) to ensure that those supervisors have had three years of work experience on construction sites and acquired the necessary knowledge of occupational safety and health before performing their duties relevant to site safety and health.



Recently, we also reviewed the Housing Authority Safety Auditing System (Maintenance & Improvement) where the items for an audit have been updated with reference to the near-miss incidents and accidents in the past two years. We hope to promote occupational safety awareness among contractors through auditing so that they can discover, identify, control and eliminate the existing or potential risks as early as possible. This year, both safety officers and safety supervisors employed under redecoration works contracts are invited to participate in a safety refresher course exclusively for the Housing Department (HD) and an after-course safety assessment to strengthen their safety awareness and inspection techniques in repairs, maintenance and improvement works.

We will keep our efforts to maintain the ISO 45001 certification for our Occupational Health and Safety Management System. The certification is a recognition of our competence in managing occupational health and safety for repairs, maintenance and improvement works.

Regarding lift maintenance contracts, we have reviewed the requirements under the Pay for Safety Scheme, and included assessment requirements on critical items in terms of safety training, job hazard analysis, working at height, housekeeping and lift maintenance works. It is hoped that contractors will be encouraged to pay more attention to the details of critical items, thereby increasing their awareness of occupational safety. Meanwhile, we hold seminars on safety regularly with the industry so as to enhance workers' safety awareness in relation to repairs, maintenance and improvement works.

When we award contracts for outsourced property management services, cleansing services and security services, we will also enhance the terms and conditions in such contracts in a timely manner. For example, we require, in the contracts this year, our contractors to provide portable fans on request to those cleansing and security staff working outdoors. Small as it is, the portable fan can help them cool off a bit while working under the hot weather.

As specified in the outsourced services contracts, contractors are required to provide their employees with adequate personal protective equipment to safeguard the latter's occupational safety and health. In order to raise the safety awareness of contractors, we continue to run the Occupational Injury Alert and Warning Triggering System and conduct seminars to the contractors to promote the importance of occupational safety and health.

To help security guards and frontline workers in the construction industry understand the risks relating to cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases as early as possible and encourage them to develop a healthy lifestyle, the OSHC and the Labour Department (LD) co-organised the Heart Caring Campaign by inviting employers in the construction and property management sectors to join the "Heart Caring" team. The HA joined the Campaign this year. With the assistance of the OSHC and the LD, the HA set up a health risk assessment station at the HD Headquarters on 17 October this year to provide free health risk assessments for cleaners, security guards and frontline workers in the

construction industry in Ho Man Tin Estate and encourage them to adopt a healthy lifestyle, as a way to show the HA's concern about the physical and mental well-being of its workers. The above event was well received by about 100 participants.

The theme of the Forum this year is to explore ways for "Accident Prevention for Safeguarding Lives". I am sure all of you, being the management level in the industry, will definitely agree that fulfilment and implementation of safe practices are the keys to success. Even one accident on a construction site is too many. We must sustain our efforts to make improvements to minimise injuries and accidents at work.

We never consider it enough to repeat our emphasis on industrial safety. Your active participation and co-operation with us is sought to achieve "Accident Prevention for Safeguarding Lives".

