

For information on
20 May 2004

LegCo Panel on Manpower

Hong Kong's Occupational Safety Performance in 2003

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in 2003.

BACKGROUND

2. The Labour Department attaches great importance to enhancing occupational safety, and is committed to ensuring that risks to the safety of people at work are properly managed and addressed through legislation, law enforcement, promotion, education and training.

3. Through the concerted efforts of all parties concerned, including employers, employees, contractors, safety professionals and the Government, steady improvements have been made in Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in recent years.

RECENT STATISTICS

Occupational Injuries

4. The number of occupational injuries in all workplaces in 2003 stood at 42,022, representing a decrease of 10.6% and 33.9% over the figure of 47,023 in 2002 and 63,526 in 1998 respectively. The injury rate per 1,000 employees declined from 19.2 in 2002 and 26.7 in 1998 to 17.7 in 2003, down 8.1% and 33.9% respectively. (Table 1)

(Table 1) Occupational Injuries in All Workplaces

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 (compared with 2002)	2003 (compared with 1998)
Fatal	240	235	199	176	210	171 (-18.6%)	171 (-28.8%)
Non-fatal	63 286	58 606	57 893	53 543	46 813	41 851 (-10.6%)	41 851 (-33.9%)
Total	63 526	58 841	58 092	53 719	47 023	42 022 (-10.6%)	42 022 (-33.9%)
Injury Rate/1,000 employees	26.7	24.3	23.3	21.6	19.2	17.7 (-8.1%)	17.7 (-33.9%)

5. Of the 171 occupational fatalities, only 28 cases arose from industrial accidents. The remaining 143 cases occurred in other workplaces such as hospitals, clinics, homes for the aged, banks, offices, shops, godowns, car parks, exhibition halls, etc. Of these, natural deaths (71 cases), struck by moving vehicle (27 cases) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (9 cases) accounted for about 75 percent.

Industrial accidents

6. The number of industrial accidents for all sectors in 2003 stood at 17,249, representing a decrease of 23.2% and 59.9% as compared with the figure of 22,453 in 2002 and 43,034 in 1998 respectively. The accident rate per 1,000 workers declined from 37.4 in 2002 and 64.7 in 1998 to 31.3 in 2003, down 16.2% and 51.6% respectively. (Table 2)

(Table 2) Industrial Accidents in All Sectors

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 (compared with 2002)	2003 (compared with 1998)
Fatal	68	52	43	34	25	28 (+12.0%)	28 (-58.8%)
Non-fatal	42 966	35 934	33 609	28 484	22 428	17 221 (-23.2%)	17 221 (-59.9%)
Total	43 034	35 986	33 652	28 518	22 453	17 249 (-23.2%)	17 249 (-59.9%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	64.7	55.1	51.7	44.6	37.4	31.3 (-16.2%)	31.3 (-51.6%)

7. Of the 28 industrial fatalities, 25 occurred on construction sites, while the remaining 3 happened in manufacturing and container handling establishments. Fall of persons from height (9 cases), contact with electricity (3 cases) and struck by falling objects (3 cases) are the major causes.

Accidents in the Construction Industry

8. Among all industries, the construction sector recorded the most significant improvement. However, it still has the highest number of fatalities and accident rate. The number of industrial accidents in the construction industry decreased from 6,239 in 2002 and 19,588 in 1998 to 4,367 in 2003, down 30.0% and 77.7% respectively. The accident rate per 1,000 workers also declined from 85.2 in 2002 and 247.9 in 1998 to 68.1 in 2003, a decrease of 20.1% and 72.5% respectively. (Table 3)

(Table 3) Industrial Accidents in the Construction Industry

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 (compared with 2002)	2003 (compared with 1998)
Fatal	56	47	29	28	24	25 (+4.2%)	25 (-55.4%)
Non-fatal	19 532	14 031	11 896	9 178	6 215	4 342 (-30.1%)	4 342 (-77.8%)
Total	19 588	14 078	11 925	9 206	6 239	4 367 (-30.0%)	4 367 (-77.7%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	247.9	198.4	149.8	114.6	85.2	68.1 (-20.1%)	68.1 (-72.5%)

Accidents in the Catering Industry

9. The catering industry topped the league table in terms of the number of accidents. In 2003, there were 8,527 industrial accidents in the catering industry, representing a decrease of 16.0% and 34.5% over the figure of 10,149 in 2002 and 13,011 in 1998. The accident rate per 1,000 workers also declined from 54.7 in 2002 and 73.9 in 1998 to 49.6 in 2003, down 9.4% and 32.9%. (Table 4)

(Table 4) Industrial Accidents in the Catering Industry

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003 (compared with 2002)	2003 (compared with 1998)
Fatal	0	0	2	0	0	0 (---)	0 (---)
Non-fatal	13 011	12 549	12 619	11 914	10 149	8 527 (-16.0%)	8 527 (-34.5%)
Total	13 011	12 549	12 621	11 914	10 149	8 527 (-16.0%)	8 527 (-34.5%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	73.9	66.9	66.2	61.5	54.7	49.6 (-9.4%)	49.6 (-32.9%)

THE WAY FORWARD

10. It is encouraging to note that Hong Kong's occupational safety and health performance has been steadily improving over the last few years. This shows that the collective efforts of all stakeholders have paid good dividends and that there has been greater awareness of occupational safety and health at the workplace. However, despite the sustained improvement in our safety and health record, there is no room for complacency. The Labour Department will continue to keep up its efforts to improve occupational safety and health at the workplace. Indeed, the Department has been taking a proactive and targeted approach in its enforcement and promotional efforts. Details of some of these efforts are set out in Annex 1. The Department will build on the progress made over the last few years and develop new initiatives to meet our commitment to ensuring that risks to the safety and health of people at work are properly managed and controlled. Some of the new initiatives include :-

- (a) launching enforcement and publicity campaigns targeting at working-at-height, lift and escalator installation and repairing and scaffolding work in construction sites to ensure that duty holders comply with safety requirements;
- (b) heightening the occupational safety awareness of employers and employees in the catering industry through a series of promotional activities : enforcing and promulgating new/amended safety regulations by blitz operations, promotional visits and publicity;

- (c) stepping up inspections of hospitals, clinics and elderly homes to ensure the adequate provision of protective equipment and sufficient provision of training on the use of such equipment;
- (d) promoting the Workplace Hygiene Charter in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Council; and
- (e) preparing a new Code of Practice to promulgate the safe use of excavators, and issuing several guidance notes.

Economic Development and Labour Bureau
Labour Department
May 2004

**Recent Measures by the Labour Department
to improve occupational safety performance**

Legislation

Between July 2003 and now, the Labour Department (“LD”) brought into operation the following pieces of regulations :-

- (a) the **Occupational Safety and Health (Display Screen Equipment) Regulation** which protects the safety and health of employees who use display screen equipment for prolonged periods of time;
- (b) the **Construction Sites (Safety) (Amendment) Regulation** which holds principal contractors, other contractors and sub-contractors all liable for safety offences;
- (c) the **Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Safety Officers and Safety Supervisors) (Amendment) Regulation** which extends the application of the regulations to the container handling industry; and
- (d) the **Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Gas Welding and Flame Cutting) Regulation** which provides for the mandatory safety training for workers before they are allowed to perform such work.

Enforcement

Construction

2. Construction sites are more prone to accidents which may cause serious injuries. Since July 2003, LD, in addition to the normal inspection programme, launched a series of campaigns targeting at dangerous work activities to ensure that contractors with unsatisfactory safety performance would take immediate steps to rectify the hazardous situations. These include :-

- (a) two special construction site blitz operations focusing on safety of working-at-height, scaffolds, electric arc-welding, gas welding and flame cutting from July to August, and October to December

in 2003. In these two blitz operations, a total of 305 improvement notices and 25 suspension notices were issued, and 408 prosecutions were taken out;

- (b) a one-month intensive law enforcement campaign, conducted in March/April 2004, targeting at sites involving the erection, dismantling and use of truss-out bamboo scaffolds, which caused three deaths in 2003. During the exercise, a total of 27 improvement notices and 17 suspension notices were issued, and 42 prosecutions taken out; and
- (c) a blitz operation, from 8 March 2004 to 17 April 2004, to tackle the safety problems of workers engaging in lift and escalator installation and maintenance works which had resulted in two deaths so far this year. During the campaign, a total of 48 improvement notices and six suspension notices were issued and 56 prosecutions taken out against contractors.

Container/Cargo handling

3. We are also concerned with the safety of container/cargo handling operation which saw a fatal accident early this year. A one-month territory-wide cargo and container handling safety campaign was launched in February 2004. In the campaign, a total of 29 improvement notices were issued and 31 prosecutions taken out.

Promotion and Education

Safety Award Schemes and Seminars

4. As the construction industry and catering industries had the largest number of work injuries, the Department ran safety award schemes for the two trades annually to enhance their awareness and foster a safety culture. This year, the two Safety Award Schemes were well received by both trades. There were 164 valid entries of catering establishments enrolled under the Catering Industry Safety Award Scheme. As for the Construction Site Safety Award Scheme, a record high of 104 construction sites joined the competition under the scheme. The enthusiastic support and participation reflected that the safety culture was fast gaining ground in these trades.

5. In addition, safety forums and thematic talks were held in conjunction with the Occupational Safety and Health Council.

Safety Publications

6. The Labour Department has published booklets, leaflets and codes of practice as well as guidance notes on work safety. The latest publications include a Code of Practice for Safe Use of Mobile Crane, a Guidance Notes on the Inspection, Thorough Examination and Testing of Suspended Working Platform and four casebooks on occupational fatalities and diseases.