

For information on
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Legislative Council Panel on Manpower

Hong Kong's Occupational Safety Performance in the First Half of 2004

PURPOSE

This paper briefs Members on Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in the first half of 2004.

BACKGROUND

2. The Labour Department seeks to improve safety and health at the workplace through legislation, law enforcement, promotion, education and training.
3. Through the concerted efforts of all parties concerned, including employers, employees, contractors, safety practitioners and the Government, Hong Kong's safety performance has been improving since 1998, with the number and rate of occupational accidents falling steadily.
4. This pattern, however, changed somewhat in the first half of 2004. The overall number and rate of occupational accidents rose slightly as compared with the same period of 2003. The increase was largely attributed to the rebound of the local economy in the period which generated more economic and business activities as compared with the severe economic downturn brought about by the outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in early 2003. As a result, the first half of 2003 provides a significantly lower base for comparison. Indeed, comparing the figures of 2004 with the same period of 2002 – a normal year – there was sustained improvement in the overall performance. It is particularly noteworthy that despite a slight increase in occupational injuries in the first half of 2004, the safety performance of the construction industry continued to make notable improvement.

RECENT STATISTICS

Occupational Injuries

5. The number of occupational injuries in all workplaces in the first half of 2004 stood at 21,064, an increase of 7.4% over the corresponding period in 2003, while the injury rate per 1,000 employees increased slightly from 16.5 to 17.5, up by 5.7%. However, compared with the first half of 2002, the number of occupational injuries fell by 8.1% and the injury rate dropped by 6.7%. (Table 1)

(Table 1) **Occupational Injuries in All Workplaces**

	2002 1 st half	2003 1 st half	2004 1 st half (compared with 2003 1 st half)	2004 1 st half (compared with 2002 1 st half)
Fatal	111	86	91 (+5.8%)	91 (-18.0%)
Non-fatal	22 813	19 525	20 973 (+7.4%)	20 973 (-8.1%)
Total	22 924	19 611	21 064 (+7.4%)	21 064 (-8.1%)
Injury Rate/1,000 employees	18.7	16.5	17.5 (+5.7%)	17.5 (-6.7%)

6. For the first half of 2004, the catering industry, transport and related services, business services and wholesale and retail trade all recorded some increases in their accident figures. However, these accidents were mostly of a minor nature and were mainly due to improper manual lifting or carrying and slip or trip on the same level.

Industrial accidents

7. The number of industrial accidents for all sectors in the first half of 2004 stood at 8,444, representing a slight increase of 2.1% over the corresponding period in 2003. The accident rate per 1,000 workers increased slightly from 30.0 in the first half of 2003 to 30.1 in the same period of 2004. However, compared with the first half of 2002, the number of occupational injuries fell by 24.5% and the injury rate dropped by 17.1%. (Table 2)

(Table 2) Industrial Accidents in All Sectors

	2002 1 st half	2003 1 st half	2004 1 st half (compared with 2003 1 st half)	2004 1 st half (compared with 2002 1 st half)
Fatal	10	14	11 (-21.4%)	11 (+10.0%)
Non-fatal	11 173	8 255	8 433 (+2.2%)	8 433 (-24.5%)
Total	11 183	8 269	8 444 (+2.1%)	8 444 (-24.5%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	36.4	30.0	30.1 (+0.4%)	30.1 (-17.1%)

8. Of the 11 industrial fatalities in the first half of 2004, 8 occurred on construction sites, while the remainder in manufacturing and other establishments. Their causes were fall of persons from height (6 cases), trapped in or between objects (2 cases), striking against/struck by moving object (1 case) and struck by falling objects (2 cases).

Accidents in the Construction Industry

9. Despite the mild increase in the number of industrial accidents in overall terms, the safety performance of the high-risk construction industry has continued to improve. However, it still has the highest number of fatalities and accident rate. The number of industrial accidents in the construction industry decreased from 2,141 in the first half of 2003 to 1,789 in the same period of 2004, down by 16.4%. The accident rate per 1,000 workers dropped from 66.0 in the first half of 2003 to 53.9 in the same period of 2004, down by 18.2%. Compared with the first half of 2002, the number of accidents showed a hefty drop of 44.5% whilst the injury rate went down by 34.7%. (Table 3)

(Table 3) Industrial Accidents in the Construction Industry

	2002 1 st half	2003 1 st half	2004 1 st half (compared with 2003 1 st half)	2004 1 st half (compared with 2002 1 st half)
Fatal	9	13	8 (-38.5%)	8 (-11.1%)
Non-fatal	3 214	2 128	1 781 (-16.3%)	1 781 (-44.6%)
Total	3 223	2 141	1 789 (-16.4%)	1 789 (-44.5%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	82.6	66.0	53.9 (-18.2%)	53.9 (-34.7%)

10. The causes of the eight fatalities were fall of person from height (4 cases), struck by falling objects (2 cases), trapped in or between objects (1 case) and striking against or struck by moving object (1 case) A table showing the breakdown of the industrial accidents in the construction industry by type of accident is at **Annex 1**.

Accidents in the Catering Industry

11. The catering industry topped the “league table” of industries in terms of the number of accidents. The number of industrial accidents increased from 3,914 in the first half of 2003 to 4,557 in the same period of 2004, up by 16.4%, while the accident rate per 1,000 workers increased from 45.9 in the first half of 2003 to 50.0 in the same period of 2004, up by 8.9%. (A detailed breakdown of the catering accidents by type of accident is at **Annex 2**.) However, compared with the first half of 2002, the number of accidents fell by 10.2%, and the injury rate dropped by 7.6%. (Table 4)

(Table 4) Industrial Accidents in the Catering Industry

	2002 1 st half	2003 1 st half	2004 1 st half (compared with 2003 1 st half)	2004 1 st half (compared with 2002 1 st half)
Fatal	0	0	0 (---)	0 (---)
Non-fatal	5 075	3 914	4 557 (+16.4%)	4 557 (-10.2%)
Total	5 075	3 914	4 557 (+16.4%)	4 557 (-10.2%)
Accident Rate/1,000 workers	54.1	45.9	50.0 (+8.9%)	50.0 (-7.6%)

NEW INITIATIVES

12. In response to the changing circumstances as reflected by the accident statistics in the first half of 2004, the Labour Department has readjusted its strategy and launched various improvement measures. They include :

- (a) stepping up inspections to minor renovation and maintenance works which have emerged increasingly as a major concern. Occupational Safety Officers of the Labour Department have stepped up point-to-point inspections not only on normal working days, but also at night and during holidays to detect and clamp down on the offending contractors;
- (b) establishing a voluntary referral system of unsafe working condition with the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies. Under the system, the property management companies will keep the Labour Department informed of unsafe working conditions for timely intervention. Since the introduction of the system, a total of 230 enquiry/complaint/referral cases were received. As a result of inspections to follow up on these cases, 27 improvement notices and 14 suspension notices were issued and 28 prosecutions taken out;
- (c) launching enforcement campaigns against container handling and storage operators which recorded 3 industrial fatalities so far this year;
- (d) stepping up publicity on the safety award schemes for the catering and construction industries to enhance their awareness and foster a safety culture;
- (e) preparing a new Code of Practice to promulgate the safe use of excavators, and issuing several guidance notes on different safety issues such as renovation safety, maintenance of low voltage electrical switch gears, etc; and
- (f) intensifying enforcement and promotion actions against lift and escalator contractors.

THE WAY FORWARD

13. The Labour Department will continue to keep up its efforts to reduce the work accident toll and explore new ways to establish and maintain an effective occupational safety and health culture in a changing environment, so that both employers and employees can become increasingly aware of maintaining safety at work.

Labour Department
December 2004

**Industrial Accidents in Construction Industry
in 1st Half of 2004
- analysed by Type of Accident -**

Type of Accident	1st Half of 2003	1st Half of 2004	Change
Trapped in or between objects	88	57 (1)	-31
Injured whilst lifting or carrying	338	315	-23
Slip, trip or fall on same level	402	309	-93
Fall of person from height	242 (2)	218 (4)	-24
Striking against fixed or stationary object	228	211	-17
Striking against or struck by moving object	400 (1)	320 (1)	-80
Stepping on object	17	11	-6
Exposure to or contact with harmful substance	13	8	-5
Contact with electricity or electric discharge	11 (3)	6	-5
Trapped by collapsing or overturning object	15 (2)	5	-10
Struck by falling object	93 (2)	72 (2)	-21
Struck by moving vehicle	11	14	3
Contact with moving machinery or object being machined	142 (1)	120	-22
Drowning	0	0	---
Exposure to fire	7 (2)	3	-4
Exposure to explosion	2	6	4
Injured by hand tool	112	94	-18
Injured by fall of ground	4	0	-4
Asphyxiation	0	0	---
Contact with hot surface or substance	10	10	---
Injured by animal	0	2	2
Injured in workplace violence	0	0	---
Others	6	8	2
Total	2 141 (13)	1 789 (8)	-352

Notes:

1. Since 1.1.1998, the number of injury cases recorded for a period indicates cases which occurred in that period.
2. Figures in brackets denote the number of fatalities.
3. The above accident figures are recorded as at 30 September 2004.

**Industrial Accidents in Catering Industry
in 1st Half of 2004
- analysed by Type of Accident -**

Type of Accident	1st Half of 2003	1st Half of 2004	Change
Trapped in or between objects	35	59	24
Injured whilst lifting or carrying	437	597	160
Slip, trip or fall on same level	601	666	65
Fall of person from height	15	24	9
Striking against fixed or stationary object	472	448	-24
Striking against or struck by moving object	202	284	82
Stepping on object	13	2	-11
Exposure to or contact with harmful substance	34	29	-5
Contact with electricity or electric discharge	0	1	1
Trapped by collapsing or overturning object	1	0	-1
Struck by falling object	16	32	16
Struck by moving vehicle	18	21	3
Contact with moving machinery or object being machined	41	42	1
Drowning	0	0	---
Exposure to fire	10	15	5
Exposure to explosion	0	2	2
Injured by hand tool	1 071	1 200	129
Injured by fall of ground	0	0	---
Asphyxiation	0	2	2
Contact with hot surface or substance	917	1 068	151
Injured by animal	23	44	21
Injured in workplace violence	0	7	7
Others	8	14	6
Total	3 914	4 557	643

Notes:

1. Since 1.1.1998, the number of injury cases recorded for a period indicates cases which occurred in that period.
2. Figures in brackets denote the number of fatalities.
3. The above accident figures are recorded as at 30 September 2004.