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Panel on Manpower

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Work-at-height Safety of the Construction Industry

Work-at-height activities in the construction industry include scaffolding works, the use of truss-out scaffolds for renovation and maintenance works, the use of suspended working platforms for construction works at external walls, and the use of different forms of ladders or working platforms for different construction activities.

2. Although previous discussions of the Panel on Manpower (the Panel) on occupational safety were mainly related to aspects other than work-at-height safety, information provided by the Administration on occupational safety in Hong Kong indicated that there were 388 cases of "fall of person from height" in the construction industry in 2008, 360 cases in 2007, 405 cases in 2006, 423 cases in 2005, and 447 cases in 2004. Among these, there were eight fatal cases in 2008, nine fatal cases both in 2007 and 2006, 14 cases in 2005 and eight cases in 2004.

3. According to the Administration, it had conducted an in-depth analysis into the causes for occupational injuries and industrial accidents in the construction industry and found that about 48% of the cases in 2005 involved workers in minor renovation, repair and maintenance works, including those working on truss-out scaffolds. The Administration was very concerned about industrial accidents caused by falling from height, and had taken the following measures to improve the situation -

- (a) launching publicity campaigns directed at workers engaged in scaffolding works to enhance their safety awareness; and
- (b) stepping up inspections at construction sites to ascertain employers' and employees' compliance with safety legislation.

4. The Administration advised that in order to improve the safety of workers working at height, LD had organized several large-scale seminars aimed at enhancing the safety awareness of employees, and had provided contractors with case analyses for sharing with their workers.

5. Work-at-height safety in construction sites are mainly regulated by Part VA of the Construction Sites (Safety) Regulations (Cap. 59I), which sets out requirements relating to scaffolds, working platforms and ladders etc. in construction safety, and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Suspended Working Platforms) Regulation (Cap. 59AC), which governs the safe use of suspended working platforms and applies to any industrial undertaking in which any suspended working platform for carrying persons is used.

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