

**Motion Debate on “Ensuring Occupational Safety”
moved by Hon POON Siu-ping
at the Legislative Council Meeting
on Wednesday, 20 February 2013**

Progress Report

Purpose

At the Legislative Council Meeting held on 20 February 2013, the motion on “Ensuring Occupational Safety” moved by Hon POON Siu-ping was carried. The wording of the motion is “As more large-scale works projects will commence in Hong Kong in the future, but the number of fatal industrial accidents in the construction industry remains high, this Council urges the Government to expeditiously adopt effective measures to ensure occupational safety”. This report sets out the progress of work of the Government to enhance construction safety.

Work Safety of Mega Works Projects

2. A key aspect of the work of the Labour Department (LD) this year is to strengthen the monitoring of work safety of mega works projects. Apart from encouraging the industry to implement safety management systems through publicity, promotion and education, LD will step up enforcement action against duty holders to ensure compliance with the requirements of relevant legislation and codes of practice. LD has established additional dedicated teams to urge contractors to implement safety management systems on construction sites through participation in project preparatory meetings and site safety management committees. We will also monitor the implementation of the safety management systems at the works sites of the contractors and take enforcement action if irregularities are detected.

3. The Development Bureau (DEVB) has enhanced the existing merit and demerit system for public works contractors by introducing a performance-tied pay for safety scheme. DEVB will also accord heavier weighting to accident rates in tender assessment such that contractors with low accident rates will have a better chance of winning a tender. DEVB is considering further strengthening site safety audits. LD will, in collaboration with DEVB, step up scrutiny of the safety audit reports of the works projects concerned.

4. To tackle systemic safety issues in a more effective way, LD will strengthen the coordination with DEVB and other public works project clients and, through involvement at the design, tendering and preparatory stages and participation in different stages of project implementation, urge contractors and site management staff to incorporate safety considerations in work method statements and designs in a timely manner.

Work-at-height Safety

5. As more than half of the construction fatal accidents in recent years were related to fall of person from height, LD will put more effort in combating work-at-height hazards this year. An advisory letter was issued in February this year to construction contractors and sub-contractors to remind them of the need to comply with relevant safety legislation, particularly the need to take effective precautionary measures to prevent accidents related to work-at-height. LD will take immediate enforcement action without prior warning against breaches of the safety legislation. Regarding work-at-height safety, LD issued last year over 1 200 suspension notices (SNs)/ improvement notices (INs) (an increase of 70% compared with 2011) and initiated a total of 889 prosecutions (an increase of 32% compared with 2011). In March this year, LD conducted a special enforcement operation targeting RMAA works sites with 214 SNs/INs issued and 197 prosecutions to be initiated. LD will also step up area patrols as well as inspection and enforcement action during office and non-office hours.

6. Furthermore, we noticed that in many fall-from-height fatal accidents workers had fallen from places of work of just 2 to 3 metres high. In order to raise the alertness of the industry on work-at-height hazard, including the potential risk associated with working just above ground, LD in collaboration with the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) will organise a “Work-at-Height Safety Forum” in late April this year to explore with the industry measures to enhance work-at-height safety, with an exhibition of efficient and practical safety equipment. A new sponsorship scheme will be launched for small-and-medium-sized enterprises (SME) to purchase mobile working platforms. Besides, LD will collaborate with the property management sector to produce safety hints for working at external walls and work-at-height and disseminate the safety message to the property owners under their management.

7. LD and OSHC jointly launched a pilot scheme on RMAA safety accreditation in June 2012. The scheme enhances the occupational safety and health (OSH) standard of the industry through auditing safety management system, training and subsidizing SMEs to purchase fall arresting devices and related equipment. With the support of the Employees' Compensation Insurance Residual Scheme Bureau which undertakes to offer insurance premium discount to accredited contractors, SMEs are provided with financial incentives to continuously improve their occupational safety performance.

Electrical Works Safety

8. In light of the seven fatal accidents involving electrocution in the construction industry last year, a series of electrical works safety promotional activities were jointly organised by LD, industry stakeholders and OSHC. We distributed publications on electrical works safety to stakeholders through electrical and mechanical trade associations and workers' unions, and issued safety alerts to around 90 000 registered electrical workers/contractors. Last year, LD stepped up inspections and enforcement actions on contravention of electrical safety regulations and conducted a joint blitz operation with the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD): over 100 SNs/INs (increased by 4 times compared with 2011) were issued and 35 prosecutions (increased by over 100% compared with 2011) were initiated. Through concerted efforts of the industry stakeholders and the Administration, we managed to curb the trend of electrocution accidents in the fourth quarter of last year.

9. Electrical work safety remains to be LD's concern this year. We will conduct inspections targeting electrical work safety and plan for another joint blitz operation with EMSD, and will take immediate enforcement action without prior warning against breaches of the safety legislation. LD will also distribute publications on electrical work safety through electrical and mechanical trade associations and workers' unions, and organise seminar on electrical work safety to sustain the alertness of electrical contractors and workers.

Strengthen Publicity and Promotion

10. LD reviewed the strategy on construction safety promotion last year. Apart from regular promulgation of safety messages through the mass media,

we have strengthened the collaboration with trade associations and workers' unions for conveying safety messages to workers direct. These include arranging for experienced workers or workers' families to visit new works sites to share their experience with site workers and disseminate safety pamphlets to promulgate the message of safeguarding themselves for their own good as well as their families. Roving exhibitions were staged in different districts at locations with numerous renovation shops to promote OSH messages to renovation workers direct.

11. Besides, LD will continue to launch the Construction Industry Safety Award Scheme in collaboration with OSHC and the industry this year. The scheme will include a safety quiz competition, roving exhibitions, promotional visits, TV/radio broadcasts, radio programmes, a fun day and an award presentation ceremony. The experience of the gold winning sites will be recorded in DVD for dissemination to construction sites and broadcast in mobile media.

Multi-Partite Collaboration

12. In conjunction with OSHC, LD held a Construction Safety Forum in March 2012 for industry stakeholders including contractors, sub-contractors, workers' unions, Construction Industry Council (CIC) and professional bodies to explore means to enhance construction safety. LD and the relevant parties of the construction industry have implemented various proposals by stages and the progress is summarised in Annex. We will work with the industry to consider further enhancing the measures this year. LD will continue to work in close partnership with related organisations, such as OSHC, CIC, trade associations, workers' unions, professional bodies, district councils and other government bureaux/departments to promote OSH through enforcement, promotion and publicity.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
April 2013

**“Construction Safety Forum” on 12 March 2012
Progress Report for Implementation of the
Improvement Measures**

Strengthening site management and supervision

(A) Caring for new construction workers

LD, in collaboration with the HKCA and the Hong Kong General Building Contractors Association, launched in July 2012 the “Caring Programme for New Construction Workers”. Under this programme, workers who newly join the industry are identified with the label “P” (i.e. Probationer) and workers who are new to a construction site with the label “N” (i.e. Newcomer). Contractors would assign mentors to take care of the workers who newly join the industry for a period of not less than three months. If the workers new to a site have already possessed experience in construction work, they would be required to carry the “N” labels for two weeks. DEVB incorporated a similar arrangement into the safety regulatory system of public works contractors in the end of last year and has commenced the implementation since early 2013. LD is reviewing the implementation of this programme, and will discuss with the industry stakeholders on measures to enhance the programme.

(B) Safety training programme for site management personnel

The CIC is formulating a safety training programme for site management personnel and resident site staff. The programme will cover safety legislation, safety management skills, risk assessment, crisis management, safety inspection, accident investigation and prevention, safety planning, and construction and design management, etc. It is envisaged that the programme will be rolled out this year.

(C) Code of Conduct for safety practitioners and enhancement of continuing professional development programme

The Hong Kong Federation of Occupational Safety and Health Associations (HKFOSHA) has drafted the Code of Conduct for safety practitioners for consultation with relevant organizations and professional bodies. The Code of Conduct is expected to be issued this year. Besides, HKFOSHA is consolidating the registered safety officers (RSOs)’ views on measures to enhance the continuing professional development programme. LD will consider revising the relevant guidance notes with a view to enhancing the

competence and professionalism of the RSOs.

Enhancing safety awareness and responsibilities of workers

(D) Strengthening of promotional activities on OSH

LD will collaborate with OSHC to launch major safety promotion activities targeting high risk work processes such as working at height and electrical works. We will strengthen the collaboration with trade associations and workers' unions to make direct contact with workers through out-reach programme and roving exhibition. We will update occupational safety information from time to time to sustain the alertness of workers. We have also produced illustrated leaflets of safety reminders and notepads in Chinese and languages of ethnic minorities for dissemination to workers through outreaching site visits.

(E) Enhancement of the “Green Card” course

In October 2012, LD completed the revision of the contents of the construction “Green Card” revalidation course by introducing case studies and analysis of serious accidents commonly found, and requiring course trainers to convey the messages through an interactive teaching mode and with the use of clear and easy to understand pictorial aids. We are revising the contents of the one-day full course.

Improving the safety management system

(F) Guidelines on project clients' participation in site safety

After studying various models of safety incentive schemes, the CIC published the “Guidelines on the Adoption of the Pay For Safety Scheme” in December 2012 with a view to encouraging project clients of private construction sites to adopt a scheme that best suits their own nature of business and safety management framework so as to improve work safety.

(G) Supporting SME of RMAA works to enhance work safety

LD in collaboration with OSHC launched the “OSH Star Enterprise – Pilot Scheme on RMAA Safety Accreditation” in June 2012. Up to the end of March this year, a total of 59 applications were received. Six of them have successfully passed the safety audit and were accredited as Star Enterprise.