



Labour Department (Headquarters)

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17 November 2016

Clerk to Panel on Manpower
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Miss Betty Ma)

Dear Miss Ma,

**Occupational Safety of foreign domestic helpers
when cleaning outward-facing window**

In response to the letter dated 9 November 2016 from the Hon. Kwok Wai Keung and the discussion of the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower at its meeting on 15 November 2016 about the cleaning of outward-facing windows (“exterior window cleaning”) of foreign domestic helpers (FDHs), I am authorized to reply as follows.

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to safeguarding the occupational safety of all employees, including that of FDHs. Having regard to the community concern over the safety of FDHs in respect of exterior window cleaning, the Labour Department (LD) has, over the past few weeks, consulted relevant stakeholders including the Consulates-General (CGs) of FDHs’ home countries in Hong Kong, FDH employer groups, FDH unions as well as employment agency associations on how to ensure FDHs performing exterior window cleaning in a safe manner.

Having thoroughly considered the views of stakeholders, LD announced on 14 November that, starting from 1 January 2017, the Standard Employment Contract for FDHs would include a new clause on exterior window cleaning to safeguard the occupational safety of FDHs. The new clause would stipulate that, when an employer requires the helper to clean the outside of any window which is not located on the ground level or adjacent to a balcony (on which it must be reasonably safe for the helper to work) or common corridor, this must be performed under the following conditions:

- (i) the window being cleaned is fitted with a grille which is locked or secured in a manner that prevents the grille from being opened; and
- (ii) no part of the helper's body extends beyond the window ledge except the arms.

In parallel, LD and the Occupational Safety and Health Council will further step up publicity and education efforts to enhance the awareness of the general public, FDHs and employers of household and occupational safety, including screening radio announcement-for-public interests, placing advertisements on the occupational safety and health at local newspapers in FDH mother languages (including Tagalog and Indonesian), printing publicity pamphlets and organizing occupational safety and health briefings or training regularly, etc. We will also continue working closely with the relevant CGs to enhance FDHs' awareness of occupational safety. We hope that everyone, including FDHs and employers, will stay vigilant on household safety to prevent the occurrence of accidents.

The new clause is only applicable to new or renewed contracts signed on or after 1 January 2017. LD strongly urges all employers who have engaged FDHs under the existing contracts to follow these requirements to ensure the occupational safety of FDHs.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Queenie Wong)
for Commissioner for Labour