

For information on
17 July 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Public Service
Duties and Manpower Situation of the
Occupational Safety Officer Grade of the Labour Department

Purpose

This paper aims to brief Members on the core duties and manpower situation of the Occupational Safety Officer (“OSO”) Grade of the Labour Department (“LD”).

Background Information

2. LD has been striving to safeguard employees’ occupational safety and health (“OSH”) through inspection and enforcement, education and training as well as publicity and promotion. The duties are mainly carried out by members of the OSO grade.

3. The core duties of OSOs include the following:

- to enforce the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Cap. 509), the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance (Cap. 59) and their subsidiary legislation to ensure that the OSH requirements are complied with;
- to inspect workplaces, carry out investigations into work accidents and OSH complaints; and advise employers and employees on how to reduce workplace hazards;
- to facilitate the development and implementation of safety management systems and advise responsible persons of workplaces on safety design and layout as well as implementation of safety programmes, etc.;
- to instill safety awareness to employers, employees and the public with a view to inculcating a safety culture in the society; and

- to organise training courses on relevant OSH legislation and provide services in relation to mandatory safety training and safety practitioners.

4. With the growth of Hong Kong's labour force through the years, the workload of the OSO grade has been increasing continuously, and the booming of the construction industry has in particular posed significant challenges to the grade. As the number of fatal industrial accidents and the industrial accident rate per thousand workers of the construction industry have been the highest among all sectors, LD has accorded top priority to OSH promotion of the construction industry which has been one of the key areas of work of front-line OSOs. Besides, LD also pays particular attention to the OSH performance of the food and beverage services industry as the number of industrial accidents in this sector is the highest of all industries.

Manpower Situation of the OSO Grade and Mitigation Measures

5. LD is keenly aware of the increasing workload of the OSO grade, and has been actively seeking additional resources pursuant to our operational needs to expand the establishment of the OSO grade so as to ensure effective delivery of their duties. According to LD's records, the establishment of the OSO grade has increased by 11.5% from 382 posts in 2012 to 426 posts at present, with 44 posts newly created. 22 of these posts were assigned to carry out front-line inspections and enforcement work targeting at the construction industry.

6. Apart from strengthening manpower, LD also prioritizes workplace inspection and enforcement work by adopting a risk-based approach. We seek to optimize the overall effectiveness of our inspections in improving OSH through considering the potential hazards, nature of work procedures and past safety performance of workplaces. LD also launches special enforcement operations targeting at high-risk industries (such as the construction industry and the food and beverage services industry), organisations with poor safety records and work processes that are more prone to serious accidents (such as work-at-height operations), and strengthens the relevant publicity and education work.

7. Besides, LD has also been making continuous efforts to relieve the workload of the OSO grade and enhance their operational efficiency through work process re-engineering, work streamlining, internal staff redeployment and enhancement of staff training.

8. LD will closely monitor the manpower situation of the OSO grade and their workload, and will continue to seek additional manpower and adopt other measures mentioned above, in order to ensure that the OSO grade is adequately staffed to meet the work challenges ahead.

For information

9. Members are invited to note the information above.

Labour Department
Labour and Welfare Bureau
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