

Industry Views Sought on National Workplace Safety and Health Strategy

To encourage greater industry ownership and for all stakeholders to take responsibilities to eliminate risks at source, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the Workplace Safety and Health Advisory Committee (WSHAC) will be consulting the industry on a draft National Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Strategy paper. Coined WSH2015, the Strategy is a long-term and comprehensive national plan to help realise Singapore's vision to halve the number of workplace fatalities by 2015.

Background – New approach needed to achieve improvements in WSH standards

WSH2015 is part of the new Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) framework that was unveiled by MOM in March last year, with three key principles:

1. Reducing risks at source by requiring all stakeholders to eliminate or minimise the risks they create.
2. Greater industry ownership of WSH outcomes.
3. Preventing accidents through higher penalties for poor safety management.

In recent years, Singapore's WSH standard has stagnated. The new framework aims to effect a vast improvement in WSH standards by encouraging a new approach to WSH. In line with the new framework, MOM set up the WSHAC in November 2005 to engage industry stakeholders. Other initiatives include a new WSH Act enacted in March 2006 and a Risk Management regulation to mandate compulsory risk assessment and management at workplaces.

WSH2015 spells out action plan

WSH2015 crystallises the strategic outcomes, strategies and action plan for the next 10 years. It aims to achieve three concrete outcomes:

1. Reduction in occupational fatalities and injuries rate
2. Workplace safety and health being embraced as an integral part of business
3. Singapore attains repute as a Centre of Excellence for WSH.

The Strategy, available at www.mom.gov.sg, outlined four key strategies and 21 specific measures to achieve the outcomes:

Strategy 1 : Building strong capabilities to better manage workplace safety and health

- Develop a comprehensive competency framework for the industry
- Develop WSH Professionals

- Build capability in Risk Management
- Establish highly credible and competent WSH training providers
- Build capability in accident investigation in industry
- Provide Compliance Assistance in WSH

Strategy 2 : Implementing an effective regulatory framework

- Develop targeted strategic enforcement and surveillance programmes based on the identification of high risk work and workplaces
- Identify systemic lapses through inspections and accident investigations
- Review of Legislation

Strategy 3 : Promoting the benefits of WSH and recognising best practices

- Industry-led WSH outreach programmes
- Develop a mechanism to estimate and reflect the real costs of accidents and promote a business case for good WSH management
- Develop a grading scheme for companies' safety and health management
- Establish the practice of including WSH performance in contracts
- Implement an enhanced WSH recognition framework
- Publish and disseminate useful and timely WSH information
- Promote and encourage the adoption of WSH best practices

Strategy 4 : Developing strong partnerships locally and internationally

- Enhancing the capabilities of WSHAC
- Establish an International Advisory Panel
- Collaboration with local partners
- Enhance Inter-agency collaboration in areas that involve WSH
- Collaboration on international projects

Inputs needed

Over the next 4 months, expect focus group discussions and seminars to solicit comments and feedback to augment the strategy. Be part of the process and provide your valuable feedback either at the sessions or email your comments to the WSHAC Secretariat at Ivan_Goh@mom.gov.sg.