National WSH Campaign 2017:
Prevent all injuries. Go home safe and healthy.

The annual National Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Campaign sets the stage for the WSH Council’s year-long outreach efforts to promote safety and health in workplaces. Organised by the WSH Council, National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and Singapore National Employers Federation, this year’s campaign marks the 12th year that the Campaign was organised.

With the message, “Prevent all injuries. Go home safe and healthy”, 2017’s campaign continues the momentum of the Vision Zero movement to foster a mindset that all workplace injuries and ill health are preventable. A family carnival was also held as part of the campaign to reach out to family members as family involvement is key in WSH.

Guest-of-honour, Secretary-General of NTUC, Mr Chan Chun Sing launched the National WSH Campaign 2017 on 22 April 2017 at the OCBC Square, Sports Hub. In his opening speech, he shared the importance of tripartite partners in working together to protect the safety and health of all workers.

Chairman of WSH Council, Mr Heng Chiang Gnee also highlighted that workplace injuries do not only affect the individual, but also his or her family. He said, “When one gets hurt at work, there are both physical and emotional impact for the individual and his or her family members. More often than not, our family is the single biggest motivation for all of us to be safe and healthy at work.” He urged all to continue to prevent injuries and ill health at work and return home to our families safe and healthy every day.

2017 Campaign focuses on preventing falls, injuries resulting in amputations and onsite vehicular accidents.

Mr Heng also shared that the WSH Council will focus its engagement efforts on three priority areas this year – prevention of falls, injuries resulting in amputations and onsite vehicular accidents. As these three areas contributed to the highest number of workplace accidents in 2016, more attention and focused efforts are needed to prevent such accidents.

To kick-start the first phase of the Campaign targeted at falls prevention, the WSH Council has released three videos to educate management and workers on taking measures to prevent falls from heights and slips, trips and falls. The videos depict scenarios where workers in various industry sectors are exposed to, such as spotting a spillage on the kitchen floor or a building without proper safety barricade. Mr Heng highlighted that the videos aim to spur workers to do their part to prevent workplace accidents. He also shared a new e-learning module developed by the WSH Council called “Safety and Health with George and Hazel”, for workers to learn more on implementing prevention measures relating to areas such as work at heights, slips, trips and falls, and ergonomics.

In closing, Mr Heng emphasised the need for all to believe in injury and ill health prevention, be proactive and take the initiative to address workplace risks.

STRATEGIC STRIDES

The Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council was established on 1 April 2008 to raise the workplace safety and health standards in Singapore. The Council comprises 18 leaders from the major industry sectors, the government, unions and professionals from the legal, insurance and academic fields. The Council’s key thrusts are to build industry capabilities to better manage WSH, to promote safety and health at work, to recognise companies with good WSH records and to set acceptable WSH practices. There are seven industry committees focusing on the areas of construction and landscaping, healthcare, logistics and transport, marine works, chemical, metalworkers, manufacturing and hospitality and entertainment. Three functional committees have also been formed to identify, champion and implement initiatives in the areas of engagement and outreach, workplace health and industry capability building.

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Engagement and outreach efforts

At the event, the WSH Council also launched a series of outreach efforts to raise WSH awareness and spread the campaign’s message to the industry and public.

WSH Exhibits highlighting “Look. Think. Do” approach

The WSH Council’s new set of roving exhibits highlight the “Look. Think. Do.” approach in preventing workplace injuries. Targeting seven WSH hotspots – working at heights, working on roofs, traffic management, loading on vehicles, working with machines, electrical equipment and lifting operations – these exhibits were developed to remind workers to look out for danger, think of how they can protect themselves and do their work safely.

E-Learning module “Safety First with Ken and Friends” for students

“Safety First with Ken and Friends” is an online e-learning module for upper primary and lower secondary school students. In this e-learning module, students can interact with Ken and his friends on topics such as safety at home, safety at play, traffic safety and slips, trips and falls.

Senior Management WSH Walkabout

In support of this year’s National WSH Campaign, over 100 companies pledged to participate in a week-long management walkabout initiated by the WSH Council, to spot falls hazards and to prevent falls at their workplace.

Held from 24 to 29 April 2017, participating companies organised their own walkabouts, of which senior management took the lead to observe work activities, check for fall hazards at their workplaces and work with employees to improve the workplace conditions.

E-Learning module “Safety and Health with George and Hazel” for adults

“Safety and Health with George and Hazel” is an online e-learning module for adults. In this e-learning module, participants can learn basic knowledge on WSH hazards, and the control measures to keep themselves safe and healthy at work. Topics include chemical safety, working at heights, slips, trips and falls and ergonomics.

Safety Starts With Me Competition 2017 Showcase

Riding on the theme “Prevent all injuries. Go home safe and healthy”, the annual “Safety Starts With Me” competition aims to raise WSH awareness and encourage the community to showcase their creativity in spreading the WSH message.

The competition offers four categories: Creative Story Writing, Creative Photography, Poster Drawing as well as Animation and Short Film. 42 winning works from this year’s competition will be exhibited at various locations and workplaces across Singapore to remind all of the importance of WSH.

For more information, go to www.wshc.sg/nationalcampaign

Interview: Work at Heights Safety

Access Solution Industry Association (ASIA) was formed in 2005 with a commitment for professional excellence and safety performance in Singapore’s access industry. In this interview, ASIA’s president, Mr Desmond Ong discusses the common issues regarding work at heights (WAH) activities and how companies can conduct such activities safely and properly.

What is ASIA’s philosophy towards workplace safety and health (WSH)?

That WSH is vital to any business and everyone is responsible for a safe and healthy workplace. ASIA’s mission is to promote safety, enhance best work practices and improving standards of Singapore’s access industry. We carry out regular safety conferences, workshops and e-newsletters. We also work closely with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and WSH Council to raise awareness on safety issues and cultivate a proactive safety culture to our members and consumers.

What are the challenges companies may face when implementing WSH initiatives? How can they be resolved?

Some companies have the misconception that being safe and productive concurrently is impossible. Companies should include WSH as part of their key performance indicators in employees’ productivity incentives and bonuses. By promoting safety as a first priority, higher productivity will come naturally as there will be no unnecessary downtime due to safety lapses and incidents.

There are also the challenges of keeping up with project schedules in a tight labour market. To tackle this, appropriate safety and skills training can be provided to enhance workers’ competitiveness and productivity. The use of innovative technologies and mechanisation can be explored to help improve safety and productivity and overcome manpower shortages. Safe work methods and processes should also be applied to curtail unnecessary downtime and manpower wastage.

WSH must also change to one that is positive. This is an ongoing process, requiring WSH to be closely linked with employers, workers and clients, with the support of top management, line supervisors to individual workers about that WSH is a priority that affects the bottom line. The mindset of WSH should be a top-down approach. Management must realise that WSH is not just a business requirement, but a way of life that fosters a culture of safety and health (WSH) and creates a better workplace environment.

How can we ensure that WSH messages are communicated to staff?

Companies can conduct toolbox meetings every morning to convey relevant WSH safety messages for the task ahead and employees can encourage workers to share their concerns and act upon them. Put up banners at prominent locations to promote the importance of WSH safety. The messages should also be available in different languages so workers can understand. If not, simple pictures will suffice. Spot checks should also be conducted periodically to ensure that WSH rules are adhered to.

How can management be involved in preventing WSH risks?

Meetings can start with a safety-related topic to address issues in a timely manner.

Management can demonstrate their commitment by developing an effective WSH policy. The policy should be set out in a way where everyone is clear on the importance of WSH in the organisation and their roles and responsibilities in ensuring safety and health at work. Management should also commit resources to understand the conditions under which their workers are working in and encourage them to take part in safety events, programmes and campaigns in the workplace.

Management should also investigate incidents on the ground and go beyond regulation to identify potential hazards.

Falls from heights have been a major cause of workplace fatalities for the past few years. What are some contributing factors and what can companies do to address them?

There could be a lack of proper Risk Assessment (RA) and effective mitigating measures. There could also be a lack of effective communication. For example, when supervisors do not communicate to workers on the WSH risks identified in the RA, workers may not understand fully about the risks involved and the preventive steps necessary to control risks. Complicity and an “old habits die hard” attitude by workers also contributes to risky behaviour such as taking shortcuts.

WSH should be a top-down approach. Management must realise that WSH is a priority that affects the bottom line. The mindset of top management, line supervisors to individual workers about WSH must also change to one that is positive. This is an ongoing process that requires everybody’s efforts. Also, don’t rely on “quick-fix” solutions.

 Companies should always investigate the root of the problem.
ProBE Plus Forum 2017: Three key WSH areas to be improved

More than 500 industry leaders and stakeholders gathered at the Singapore Expo Max Atria to attend the annual Programme-based Engagement (ProBE) Plus Forum held on 19 April 2017. Organised by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM), Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council, and supported by the WSH institute, the forum aimed to raise industry awareness of WSH priority areas and highlight efforts in partnership with industry to address identified priority areas.

Onsite vehicular safety

Accidents involving stuck by moving vehicles was the second highest contributor to workplace fatalities after falls in 2016. These accidents were mainly caused by a lack of proper onsite vehicular safety management system.

Hence, MOM will be launching an onsite compliance assistance programme, “Managing Onsite Vehicular Safety”, or “MOVES” in August, where WSH consultants will conduct visits to companies, and guide them in developing and implementing onsite traffic safety management plans. A vehicular safety seminar will also be held later this year, to raise awareness on the risks of working near moving vehicles.

Prevention of amputation injuries

Amputation cases from workplace accidents are also prevalent, with hand injuries accounting for 96% of all cases. To educate industry on proper use of hand tools and machine safety, MOM and the WSH Council will organise a Safe Hands Seminar in the second half of the year. Case studies will be shared to help industry learn about good practices and preventive measures such as machine guards to eliminate hand injuries.

Falls prevention

Mr Tan pointed out that falls remain the top contributor of workplace fatalities, but concerted efforts by industry have reduced the number of falls from height fatalities by more than 45%, from 24 in 2009 to 13 in 2016.

As 70% of the accidents occurred in small- and medium-sized enterprises, MOM will step up support to smaller construction workites through the Mobile Work at Heights (WAH) programme. Through the programme, appointed WSH professionals will visit workplaces and provide practical onsite guidance to supervisors and workers on WAH safety. In 2016, 80 Mobile WAH visits were conducted in collaboration with volunteers from the Singapore Institute of Safety Officers (SISO). The number of visits will increase to 300 in 2017.

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Workplace safety and health is everyone’s responsibility

Mr Tan said, “Making a living should not cost the worker his limbs or life. We owe it to the worker and his family to provide him with a safe and healthy workplace.” Mr Tan then concluded by urging the industry to work collectively in improving their WSH performance.

For more information, go to https://goo.gl/mWvkrk

Stepping up of WSH efforts in the construction industry

At the Singapore Contractors Association Ltd (SCAL)'s Construction Safety, Health and Security Seminar on 6 June 2017, Minister of State for Manpower Mr Sam Tan pointed out that 2016 had ended with the lowest fatality rate for the construction industry since 2007 (4.9 per 100,000 employed persons). Mr Tan attributed this reduction to a collective effort by leaders of construction companies to improve workplace safety. He also commended SCAL for its strong support which played a significant role in the improvement.

Mr Tan then shared that although fatality rates have dropped, major injuries in construction is still a concern as it remained the highest across the sectors in 2016. More efforts are needed to reduce major injuries in the construction industry.

Mr Tan highlighted that in August this year, MOM will launch a programme called “Managing Onsite Vehicular Safety” or “MOVES” in short. Under the programme, Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) consultants will visit and assess work premises to raise awareness and guide employers on traffic safety management. He emphasised that companies should have clearly demarcated routes to separate workers from vehicles as this would greatly prevent vehicular accidents.

Mr Tan further announced that the National Crane Safety Taskforce under the WSH council will be producing a video on the preventive steps to take during lifting operations. These include the clear delineation of roles in the lifting team and conducting pre-lifting checks. Mr Tan also urged the industry to sign up for the “Mobile Work at Heights” programme when the next round of visits open in July. Under this programme, WSH professionals will provide onsite practical assistance and guidance on tackling work at heights hazards.

For more information, go to https://goo.gl/RWSHgH
Preventing occupational skin diseases caused by cement

Occupational skin diseases can be caused by contact with or exposure to substances such as cement, wood dust, wood preservatives, fibreglass, solvents, oils and epoxy resins. They can also be triggered by the use of personal protective equipment such as rubber or leather gloves and boots.

In the construction industry, cement and cement-containing substances such as cement powder, mortar and concrete are widely used. Cement can irritate and damage the skin as it is abrasive and alkaline. It may also cause an allergic skin reaction.

Workers who come into contact with cement have the potential to develop cement-related skin problems. They may experience symptoms such as rashes, itch or dry skin on their hands, forearms, legs and sometimes on the back.

Prevention tips

It is important to educate workers on the health effects of exposure to cement, and adopt safe work practices to prevent occupational skin diseases. These include the use of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as:

- Impervious gloves (can be used with thin inner cotton liners);
- Overalls with long sleeves and full-length trousers; and
- Waterproof boots.

Protective clothing should also be properly worn to avoid “traps” for fresh mortar or concrete to fall in (i.e., with sleeves over the gloves and trouser legs over the boots, and not tucked inside). If “trapping” does happen, steps should be taken to quickly clean the contaminated skin and protective clothing.

Seek treatment early

Employers should encourage workers who experience symptoms of skin problems due to work, to seek treatment early. Advice may include the use of PPE or removal from exposure if the worker is allergic to the chemical.

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls at work

Do you know that slips, trips and falls are the most common cause of injuries in workplaces?

Slips, trips and falls make up more than 20% of all workplace injuries.

Over 1,000 employees get hurt every year.

Slips, trips and falls are no laughing matter; they may even cause serious accidents and injuries such as fractures and concussions.

Slips, trips and falls are:

- **SLIP** Stepping on a slippery surface or an object and losing balance.
- **TRIP** Foot striking against an object and losing balance.
- **FALL** Stepping on an uneven surface and losing balance.

What are slips, trips and falls?

For more information, go to www.wshc.sg/slipstripsfalls

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls at work

Prevention tips

- Always report poor lighting.
- Maintain neat, dry and clean surfaces.
- Hang power cords over aisles or work areas.
- Use anti-slip working shoes or flooring.
- Use warning signs for slippery surfaces.
- Use handrails when climbing stairs or slopes.
- Use protective equipment as intended to ensure own safety and health at work.

As an employer, you should:

- Encourage employees to report and suggest preventive measures against slips, trips and falls.
- Establish clear housekeeping standards.
- Conduct routine inspections and risk assessments.
- Provide personnel with adequate training and supervision.
- Keep work areas clean and tidy.
- Clear up spillages immediately.
- Report any potential dangers and suggestions promptly.
- Adhere to safe work procedures.
- Use protective equipment as intended to ensure own safety and health at work.
**Case #1: Worker Run Over by Excavator**

**Employer fined for failure to ensure safety**

On the day of the accident, the deceased’s co-worker (an excavator operator) was operating an excavator located at the horticulture waste disposal area at the nursery. He proceeded to grab a pile of waste with the grabber of the excavator, and swung the excavator in a clockwise direction to deposit the waste into the chipper. He then swung the excavator back in an anti-clockwise direction towards the waste.

While repeating this process, the operator heard noises coming from the chipper. Thinking that the excavator was in the path of the air intake of the chipper, he proceeded to shift the excavator track so that it was almost parallel to the chipper, before moving the excavator forward and stopping. After re-positioning the excavator, the operator heard someone asking for help at the back of the excavator. He stepped out from the cabin, walked to the back of the excavator and saw the deceased lying face-up on the pile of horticulture waste.

Investigations revealed that the accused company had conducted a risk assessment (RA) on the disposal of horticulture waste. It identified the hazard of workers being hit by machines and had established control measures such as barricading work areas and putting up warning signs, providing a banksman to assist with blind spots by guiding the excavator. However, none of the measures were implemented. The work area was not barricaded and there were no warning signs seen at the work area, apart from faded signs pasted on the excavator itself. There was also no banksman present when the operator was performing the disposal work.

Furthermore, the work area was situated along a road where heavy vehicles would travel through, and the accused company was aware that the work area would have obstructed traffic. However, the accused company failed to review its RA and establish alternative measures to be taken.

The accused company had also failed to ensure that the excavator was fully equipped with the necessary components. The excavator was missing 2 out of the 4 mirrors that was required according to the excavator’s operating manual. The missing mirrors allowed more blind spots to be formed and exposed workers to the risk of being hit by the excavator.

For failing to take adequate safety measures, the accused company was fined $95,000 under the Workplace Safety and Health Act.

**Case #2: Worker Run Over by Tipper Truck**

**Companies fined for failure to ensure safety**

The employer’s tipper truck drivers were to enter the worksite to load and unload soil. Tickets were issued to drivers who go to the worksite to perform soil transfers.

On the day of the accident, a tipper truck driver had stopped along the road within the worksite entrance to wait for the issuance of a ticket. After the deceased issued a ticket to the driver through the tipper truck’s right window, the driver raised the window screen and moved off.

However, the driver failed to keep a proper lookout ahead for any persons near the front right portion of the tipper truck or check the left and right side mirrors. He also failed to notice that the deceased was still positioned near the front right portion of the tipper truck. As a result, the tipper truck collided with the deceased.

Investigations revealed that the employer failed to implement safety measures to address the risk of workers being hit by heavy vehicles whilst working at the worksite. For example, the employer did not provide a banksman to assist their drivers to check their blind spots when moving off. The banksman would have been able to warn any persons to keep away from the moving tipper truck and warn the driver when it was unsafe to move the tipper truck.

The occupier also failed to set a speed limit at the worksite for drivers, nor was traffic management established at the worksite. A banksman would have been able to guide drivers in adhering to speed limit and control traffic movement.

There were also no designated pathways for workers to move in the worksite. The tipper truck driver or the deceased would have to walk to where the vehicles were unloading at the worksite for ticket collection. The lack of a designated collection point thus increased the risk of workers being hit by vehicles.

For failing to ensure the safety of its workers, the employer was fined $65,000, while the occupier was fined $75,000 under the Workplace Safety and Health Act.

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**New Resources**

**“Case Studies- Accidents Involving Work at Heights” Booklet**

The lessons learned from past workplace incidents will help to prevent the next incident from recurring. This booklet is a compilation of past workplace accidents involving work at heights. Share these cases at your company’s training or toolbox meetings to help your workers carry out their work safely.

Download it at [https://goo.gl/TLTs4k](https://goo.gl/TLTs4k)

**Workplace Safety and Health Guidelines on Process Hazard Analysis**

Industrial processes (e.g. purification, dilution, mixing or blending and packaging operations) may pose process hazards that could result in catastrophic outcomes if not carefully handled. It is therefore critical to perform a Process Hazard Analysis (PHA) so as to identify process hazards as early as possible and put safety measures in place.

This publication introduces small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to PHA methodologies commonly used in the chemical process industry. Use this publication to incorporate relevant aspects of PHA into your WSH management system as part of good process safety management.

Download it at [https://goo.gl/rW16Z4](https://goo.gl/rW16Z4)

**Workplace Safety and Health Guidelines on Event Management**

This publication helps event organisers and contractors identify work hazards present in various work activities, and suggests preventive measures to manage the associated risks. Employers should always look out for the safety, health and well-being of their employees. Through better safety and health management, companies can strive towards a goal of zero harm.

Download it at [https://goo.gl/7VRa2](https://goo.gl/7VRa2)

**“I Can Prevent Falls” Video**

Catch the final video of the 3-part series centred on how we can prevent falls at work. Learn how you can use the “LOOK, THINK, DO.” approach when faced with the hazard, and watch how the worker applies this whilst using a ladder to prevent injuries.

Watch it at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wce6cCE94WA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wce6cCE94WA)
"I CAN PREVENT FALLS."

Take necessary measures when working at heights.

You can prevent injuries at work. **LOOK** out for danger. **THINK** of how you can protect yourself. **DO** your work safely.

To find out more on how you can prevent falls, visit wshc.sg