

Employers and workers of construction industry urged to observe work-at-height safety

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about the recent spate of serious accidents related to work-at-height in the construction industry and reminds those working at height to pay special attention to work safety.

A spokesman for the LD said today (January 21), "Four workers fell and unfortunately died while working at height in the past few weeks. The LD is highly concerned about the situation. Apart from issuing Work Safety Alerts and Suspension Notices to stop the related work processes, the LD has launched a special enforcement operation focusing particularly on high-risk operations such as scaffolding work."

"The LD, jointly with the Occupational Safety and Health Council and other stakeholders of the industry, is actively organising a seminar on work-at-height safety. We will invite various stakeholder groups from the construction industry to take part in order to alert them to the potential risks involved in work-at-height and remind them of the necessary safety measures. Furthermore, the Department will continue to promote work-at-height safety messages through various media channels and platforms," the spokesman added.

To prevent workers from falling from height while working, employers shall appoint a competent person to conduct task-specific risk assessments to identify all potential hazards associated with the work, taking into account the nature of work and the work environment and, according to the results of the risk assessments, formulate safe systems of work which comply with the relevant safety legislation. Main considerations include:

- Ladders should generally be used for ascending and descending only. Using them for other work is unsafe and should be avoided;
- Provide workers with suitable working platforms and ensure their proper use by workers. Use of boatswain's chairs is strictly prohibited;
- Workers should put on suitable safety harnesses, which shall be attached continuously to a suitable and secure anchor point, an independent lifeline or a fall-arresting system, when erecting, dismantling and using a truss-out bamboo scaffold; and
- Safeguard all unprotected floor openings or other void spaces at construction sites by erecting suitable guard-rails or placing coverings to prevent workers from falling through them inadvertently.

Both employers and employees are responsible for ensuring work safety to

prevent accidents from happening. Employers are required to comply with the relevant safety regulations and implement safety systems of work, including providing workers with sufficient safety equipment and ensuring its proper use by workers. At the same time, workers are also required to follow the safety work procedures as stipulated by employers, including proper use of safety equipment. Workers should report any unsafe working condition to the LD (telephone number: 2542 2172) as soon as possible. The LD will take follow-up action as soon as possible to ensure workers' safety.