

# Labour Department highly concerned about fatal work accident that happened yesterday

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about a fatal work accident that happened at a housing estate in Tuen Mun yesterday afternoon (January 21), in which a male worker while performing refuse clearing work on an upper floor of a building fell through a refuse chute into a refuse container on the ground floor. He was certified dead later in hospital. The LD is saddened by the death of the worker and expresses its deepest sympathies to his family.

The LD's spokesman said today (January 22), "We commenced an immediate on-site investigation as soon as we were notified of the accident and issued suspension notices to the employer concerned and the property management company of the estate to suspend the use of refuse chutes to transport refuse in the estate. They cannot resume the use of the refuse chutes until the LD is satisfied that measures to abate the relevant risk have been taken."

The spokesman added, "We will complete investigation as soon as possible to identify the cause of the accident, ascertain the liability of the duty holders and recommend improvement measures. We will take action pursuant to the law if there is any violation of the work safety legislation."

The general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance require employers to provide safe working environments, plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the above provisions are liable to a fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months.

In regard to yesterday's accident, the LD will issue a Work Safety Alert through its website and email, giving a brief account of the accident concerned to duty holders, workers' unions, professional bodies of safety practitioners and others, reminding the industry of the importance of following safety precautionary measures to prevent the recurrence of similar accidents.

The LD will also remind the employer concerned of the liability for employees' compensation under the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, assist family members of the deceased to claim employees' compensation and closely follow up on the case. For those with financial difficulties, the LD will assist them to apply for appropriate emergency funds. Subject to the needs and wishes of family members of the deceased, the LD will also liaise with the Social Welfare Department for financial or other assistance.

For the sake of securing the safety and health of employees at work, the LD appeals to employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe

and without risks to health. Employees should co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and use personal protective equipment provided properly to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.