

Labour Department launches series of measures to enhance construction safety

The Labour Department (LD) is highly concerned about the recent spate of fatal and serious work accidents in the construction industry. The LD has stepped up measures in terms of inspection and enforcement, publicity and promotion, as well as education and training, including a special enforcement operation targeting construction sites of new works to curb unsafe work practices in mid-November.

A spokesman for the LD today (November 30) said, in light of the recent spate of serious work accidents, the LD conducted a two-week special enforcement operation targeting construction sites of new works from November 13 to 24. During the operation, the LD inspected 1 060 construction sites across the territory, with about 210 improvement notices/suspension notices issued and about 35 prosecutions initiated.

To further strengthen inspection and enforcement efforts, in addition to routine inspections, the LD has also set up Special Task Forces to continue to conduct rigorous inspections and enforcement actions targeting construction sites (especially sites of new works and sites involving high-risk work processes) in the coming period to combat unsafe work activities.

For promotion and publicity, the LD will continue to step up efforts to disseminate occupational safety and health (OSH) messages to duty holders through different channels, with the aims of enhancing the safety awareness of workers and frontline supervisors as well as reminding them not to contravene OSH legislation. The LD will also collaborate with the Occupational Safety and Health Council to organise a wide range of publicity and promotional activities to reach frontline workers in a more effective manner, fostering OSH culture in the construction industry.

For training and education, the LD has enriched the curriculum of Mandatory Basic Safety Training Course (commonly known as Green Card) by adding new teaching content such as safety hints for new construction workers, safety in lifting operations, etc, to minimise the risks of accidents.

To facilitate the conduct of inspections in a more targeted manner, the LD has established an online OSH complaint platform (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ld0001/en/) to enable employees and members of the public to report unsafe working conditions with mobile electronic devices, so that prompt follow-up actions can be conducted. All complaints will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Protecting OSH of workers in the construction industry is a shared

responsibility between employers and employees. The LD appeals to contractors and employers of construction works to enhance their site safety management systems, particularly in respect of high-risk work processes such as work-at-height, operation of heavy machinery, lifting operations, etc. They should also provide plant and systems of works that are safe and without risk to health for relevant work processes. Workers should raise their safety awareness and co-operate with contractors and employers to implement OSH measures to avoid endangering themselves and others.

Under the general duty provisions of OSH legislation, employers who commit extremely serious offences can be prosecuted on indictment, which is subject to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years. Employees who contravene the aforesaid provisions are liable to a maximum fine of \$150,000 and imprisonment for six months.