

# Labour Department launches special inspection exercise targeting bamboo scaffolding work

The Labour Department (LD) today (February 21) commenced a two-week special inspection exercise, targeting construction sites with large-scale bamboo scaffolds throughout the territory, including checking the safety and stability conditions of these bamboo scaffolds, with the aim of ensuring the work safety of workers.

If any violations of the legislation are detected during the inspection exercise, occupational safety officers of the LD will take rigorous enforcement actions, including issuing suspension notices and improvement notices, and taking out prosecutions without prior warning, in order to deter unsafe operations.

A spokesman for the LD said, "We are deeply concerned about the serious work accident involving the collapse of a bamboo scaffold at a construction site in Kai Tak yesterday (February 20), resulting in the deaths of two workers and injuries to three others. The LD is collaborating with relevant departments to conduct a thorough investigation to identify the cause of the accident and ascertain the liability of duty holders. The LD will take actions pursuant to the law if there are any violations of the occupational safety and health (OSH) legislation."

The spokesman added, "The LD is currently amending its Code of Practice for Bamboo Scaffolding Safety (CoP), which involves enhancement of the stability of bamboo scaffolds, including the technical requirements for putlogs, and prohibiting unauthorised alteration of bamboo scaffolds. The amendments will also require bamboo scaffolders to possess valid safety training certificates before they are allowed to carry out relevant scaffolding work. In addition, the CoP will also set out in detail the work requirements of 'Competent Persons' in supervising workers performing scaffolding work. We plan to issue this revised CoP between March and April this year."

Under the general duty provisions of the 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.

The LD reminds contractors and employers to provide plant and systems of work that are safe and without risks to health to safeguard the work safety of workers. Employees should also co-operate with their employers, adopt all safety measures and properly use personal protective equipment provided to avoid endangering their own work safety and that of other workers.