

Labour Department launches special inspection exercise to ensure work safety

The Labour Department (LD) today (August 28) commenced a two-week special inspection exercise that targets high-risk processes, including work-at-height and electrical work, at construction sites, with the aim of curbing unsafe work activities and ensuring the work safety of workers.

A spokesman for the LD said, "We are highly concerned about the recent spate of fatal and serious work accidents that happened in the construction industry. The LD is saddened by the loss of life and the injuries suffered by workers, or even employers, in these accidents. The department will seriously follow up each accident and conduct full investigations to identify the causes of the accidents and ascertain the liabilities of duty holders. The LD will take actions pursuant to the law if there are any violations of the occupational safety and health legislation."

In light of the recent fatal and serious work accidents involving high-risk activities such as workers falling from height and being electrocuted, occupational safety officers will pay particular attention to these activities during the inspection exercise. They will closely monitor whether duty holders have provided safe systems of work for these specific work activities. If any violations of the legislation are detected, the LD will take strong enforcement actions, including issuing suspension notices and improvement notices, and initiating prosecutions without prior warning.

Under the general duty provisions of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance, employers are obligated to provide safe working environments, plant and systems of work for their employees. Those who contravene the relevant legislation with serious circumstances can be prosecuted on indictment, which is subject to a maximum fine of \$10 million and imprisonment for two years; or \$3 million and imprisonment for six months on summary conviction of other cases.

The LD emphasises that contractors and employers should conduct proper assessments of potential work hazards before the commencement of work, formulate safe work methods and adopt appropriate safety measures and procedures. Employees, on their part, should co-operate with their employers, adhere to all safety measures, and use provided personal protective equipment properly. Maintaining vigilance is crucial to preventing serious consequences.

The spokesman reiterated that safeguarding the occupational safety and health of construction workers is one of the prime tasks of the LD. Surprise inspections will continue to be conducted, and any violation of the occupational safety and health legislation will be addressed in accordance

with the law.