

SPEECH BY MR SAM TAN, MINISTER OF STATE (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND MANPOWER) AT CRANE SAFETY SYMPOSIUM 2016 ON THURSDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2016, 2PM, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY ACADEMY (BCA)

Mr Mohamed Abdul Akbar
Chairman of the National Crane Safety Taskforce

Distinguished guests,

Industry partners,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon,

1 I am happy to join you at this annual Crane Safety

Symposium. This is an important event jointly organised
by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the WSH

Council's National Crane Safety Taskforce once every
year.

2 I am heartened to see more than 400 participants today.

It shows you take a serious view of workplace safety

and health and want to do things better to improve the safety and health of our workers.

WSH Performance in the Crane Industry

3 How does the crane industry fare in terms of safety and health performance so far? Let me share with you some information. Last year, we had 22 crane-related Dangerous Occurrences (DOs) and 11 workers were injured as a result. In the first nine months of this year, we have recorded 17 such occurrences which resulted in 8 injured workers and 1 fatality.

4 What are the causes of these DOs? Investigations revealed that poor maintenance of cranes and unsafe practices adopted in the lifting operations were the two main causes.

5 We have examined the current situation carefully with our industry partners in the National Crane Safety Taskforce and have identified 3 areas of focus to tackle

the DOs in crane operations.

Formation of Lorry Crane Working Group (LCWG)

6 First, is to address the increasing number of DOs involving lorry cranes, which accounted for 30% of all crane-related DOs. Lorry cranes are widely used, everywhere and in very public areas, whether on public roads or in close vicinity to residential areas. While lorry cranes may seem to pose lower risk than bigger cranes, they in fact have the capacity to cause significant damage to property and endanger lives.

7 Let me share an example. Last year, a lorry crane toppled and crashed into a house while lifting a boom lift to unload it from the lorry bed. Investigations revealed that the outriggers of the lorry crane were not fully deployed. You can see the impact of the accident from the screen here (show power-point slide). Inadequate extension of outriggers was the number one cause for these DOs, reflecting a lack of competency in crane

operations among the operators and workers.

- 8 The National Crane Safety Taskforce has therefore decided to set up a workgroup to develop specific measures to improve the safe usage of Lorry Cranes. The Lorry Crane workgroup, to be led by Mr Mohamed Abdul Akbar, Chairman of the National Crane Safety Taskforce, will look into lorry crane operator training and competency, as well as safe practices in the use of lorry cranes. The review will be completed in 6 months.

Surge Protective Device (SPD) for tower cranes

- 9 Second, is to address the potential fire risk in tower crane cabins. Tower cranes are prone to lightning strikes because of their height. In fact, a tower crane was struck by lightning on Christmas Eve last year, causing a short circuit in its distribution box. This resulted in a fire in the crane cabin. Fortunately, the crane operator managed to escape and made his way down to the ground safely. You can see from the slide

shown on the screen (show power-point slide). While this might be an isolated incident, we must mitigate such risks.

- 10 Feedback from tower crane suppliers suggest that a significant number of tower cranes' electrical circuits were damaged due to lightning strikes every year. Each case could potentially result in a fire outbreak in the cabin, endangering the lives of the crane operators. This risk can easily be prevented or mitigated with the installation of a Surge Protection Device. The National Crane Taskforce will engage industry partners to encourage this installation. In fact, crane owners such as ST Marine and Ho Lee Machinery Pte Ltd have already committed to install the device. I would like to encourage all crane owners to do the same as soon as possible.

Data Logger

- 11 Third, is to accelerate the installation of data loggers in

mobile cranes. Last year, MOM announced that all mobile cranes must be fitted with a data logger by 1 August 2018. A Data Logger Fund by the WSH Council was also launched to provide 50% co-funding of the installation cost up to \$5,000 per mobile crane. However, take up of data loggers has been slow. A survey by MOM shows that more than 60% of mobile cranes in Singapore have yet to be fitted with data loggers.

- 12 Data loggers can help prevent accidents. Companies such as Bok Seng Group, for example, have used the information collected from the data loggers to review crane operations on a regular basis to prevent overloading of their cranes. The data loggers also prompts crane operators to be more careful when operating mobile cranes by monitoring their actions. If you have not installed data loggers in your mobile cranes, please tap onto the funding and act quickly.

Conclusion

13 We need everyone to work together to make our workplaces safer and healthier. We will continue with our enforcement. And at the same time, help the industry raise WSH standards through initiatives such as the Data Logger Fund and encouraging the adoption of technology such as the Surge Protective Device. But we need companies and workers to play their part too.

14 For companies, this means ensuring that your equipment are well-maintained and your crane operators well-trained. You can tap on resources such as the WSH Council's Guide on safe use of overhead

travelling cranes, gantry cranes, jib cranes and hoists found in your symposium bags.

15 For workers, you should always do your personal risk assessment before operating the crane - Look out for possible dangers, Think how you should operate the crane safely before you actually Do the operation.

Always start off with a pre-operational check to ensure the crane is in good working condition before you do the lifting operation. Four workshops on how to carry out pre-operational checks for cranes will be conducted later in the afternoon. I hope that you will learn much from these workshops.

- 16 In conclusion, I would like to ask every one of us here to do our part to safe guard the safety and health of all our workers. Together, we can prevent all injuries so that everyone can go home safe and healthy. Thank you and have a fruitful day ahead.

Thank you.

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