

ohe19990326a

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460
Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 3.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

TO BE EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

SPEECH BY MR OTHMAN HARON EUSOFE

MINISTER OF STATE FOR MANPOWER

AT THE CONFERENCE ON

INDUSTRIAL NOISE CONTROL
CUM NOISE CONTROL AWARDS PRESENTATION

ON 26 MARCH 1999 AT 9.30 AM AT MARINA MANDARIN

1. I am pleased to be here this morning to officiate at the opening ceremony of this Conference and to present plaques to winners of the Noise Control Awards. Last year, when I officiated at the Conference on the Tax Incentive Scheme for Noise and Chemical Hazard Control, I said that it was an important milestone in the promotion of occupational health and safety in Singapore. This Conference is yet another milestone in our continuing efforts to promote occupational health and safety at the national level. For the first time, companies that excel in noise control will be recognised for their efforts.

2. Noise is a common occupational health problem. In Singapore, it is estimated that about 67000 workers in 17000 factories are exposed to excessive noise levels. We have taken various measures to protect workers from excessive noise. The Factories (Noise) Regulations, which came into force in 1997, require employers to take measures to reduce noise as far as is reasonably practicable. If, despite the measures, the noise exposure level is 85 dBA or more, employers must reduce the exposure time or provide workers with ear protectors and mark the areas in which they should be worn. Workers must be told of the noise hazard and the preventive measures that must be taken. They are also required to undergo regular hearing tests to detect any early signs of hearing loss.

3. The Regulations also require certain factories to appoint competent persons to carry out regular noise monitoring and to advise management on noise control. In addition, suppliers of noisy machinery must provide information on the noise level generated by their products and label them.

4. To assist factories in complying with the regulations, training courses have been conducted by approved training centres to train competent persons to conduct noise monitoring and to advise on noise control measures. So far, more than 500 persons have been trained on noise monitoring, and 200 persons on noise control. Guidelines on noise control and hearing conservation have been issued by my Ministry's Department of Industrial Health. Seminars and workshops on industrial noise have been conducted and pamphlets have been distributed to relevant factories.

5. My Ministry has been monitoring the compliance with the regulations closely. New factories applying for registration are inspected to ensure that noise hazards are controlled and workers are adequately protected against such hazards. Existing factories with a noise hazard are checked regularly to ensure compliance with the relevant requirements under the Noise Regulations.

6. With the above measures and initiatives, we are better able to control the problems of excessive noise. The latest statistics are encouraging. While there was an increasing trend in the number of noise induced deafness cases prior to the introduction of the Factories (Noise) Regulations in 1997, the numbers showed a drop from 1,302 cases in 1996 to 861 cases in 1997 and a further drop to 674 cases in 1998.

7. However, as noise induced deafness is a chronic disease that takes several years to develop, the reduction in noise induced deafness cases over the last two years may not indicate the actual trend of this occupational disease. Hence we cannot afford to be complacent and have to continue to find new and more effective ways to minimise noise exposure.

8. We want to encourage our factories to use quieter machinery or install effective engineering measures to control noise. A tax incentive scheme has been introduced with effect from Year of Assessment 1999 to assist factories to partially defray the cost of implementing effective noise control measures. This provides a one year accelerated depreciation allowance, which means that capital expenditure on the noise control measures can be expensed off in one year if certain criteria are met.

9. To promote greater awareness of the noise hazard, my Ministry is introducing the Noise Control Awards or NCA, in short to recognize companies that excel in noise reduction through engineering control measures.

10. Two types of NCA will be given biennially- the Excellence Award and the Merit Award.

The Excellence Award will be given to companies that have outstanding achievement in noise control at the workplace. To qualify for this award, the noise level in the entire premises must be below 85 dBA, the noise reduction should be at least 6 dBA per source, and the total noise reduction should be at least 10 dBA

The Merit Award will be presented to companies that have significant achievement in noise control at the workplace. The criteria are similar to that of the Excellence Award except that the overall noise level in the premises must be below 90 dBA. At the same time, there must be an effective hearing conservation programme implemented.

11. This morning, I have great pleasure in honouring the first ever Noise Control Award winners. I would like to congratulate them for their excellent contribution to noise control management in the workplace. Your contribution will no doubt enhance the quality of worklife in your companies.

12. Winning the NCA demonstrates top management's commitment to improve occupational health standards in the Company. Investment in noise control brings many benefits. Effective noise control helps to lower operational cost in the long run. By minimising noise exposure, the risk of noise-induced deafness and the need to pay compensation liability will be reduced.

13. More importantly, noise control offers the added benefit of a more pleasant and congenial working environment. These benefits will contribute to enhance employer-employee relationship, raise productivity and strengthen the companies competitiveness.

14. In conclusion, let us work together to reduce and minimise workplace noise level and prevent noise-induced deafness. We must continuously aim for excellence that will take us into the next millennium, where our safety, health and environmental standards will earn us a distinctive leadership position in the global marketplace.

15. It is my pleasure to declare the Conference open.

oh19990326a

National Archives of Singapore