

**Speech by Mr Sam Tan, Minister of State (Prime Minister's Office & Manpower)
at Workplace Safety and Health Leadership Summit for Marine Industries 2016
on Wednesday 23 November 2016, 1.30pm,
Room 331, Level 3, Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre**

Professor Chan Eng Soon, Chairman, WSH Council (Marine Industries Committee),

Members of the WSH Council and Committees,

Distinguished speakers,

Industry partners,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I am happy to join you at the 2nd Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Leadership Summit for the Marine Industries 2016 organised by the WSH Council.

2 The first Summit was held in 2009. At that time, the marine sector was doing badly in workplace safety and health. The workplace fatal injury rate jumped from 9.2 per 100,000 workers in 2008 to 11.1 in 2009. It was performing worse than other high risk industries, such as Construction and Manufacturing. There was an urgent need then to address the situation. To get leadership commitment from the Marine sector to improve workplace safety and health outcomes, the WSH Council organised the

first Marine Industries WSH Leadership Summit. 26 top management representatives from various shipyards participated in the WSH Council's 'Pledge for Zero' initiative. They committed to reduce the marine sector's fatality rate to less than 1.8 per 100,000 workers by 2018. Since then, we have also held CEO Roundtable events annually for industry leaders to discuss key issues, monitor their progress and make joint action plans to improve the sector's workplace safety and health performance.

WSH Performance in the Marine Sector

3 As a result, the marine sector's workplace safety and health performance has improved steadily. Fatality rate improved from 11.1 in 2009 to 4.2 in 2015. But we are still far from our target of 1.8 per 100,000 workers. What you have done collectively thus far is commendable, but there is more that needs to be done to achieve our target.

4 In the first ten months of this year, 6 marine workers have lost their lives.¹ This is two more than the whole of last year. Let me share what happened to one of them. On 1 January 2016, a worker was on a vessel to rectify leaks in the pipelines which had undergone pressure testing the night before. While he was dismantling a pipe connector, it

¹ As of 31 Oct 2016.

suddenly burst and struck him. Sadly, he did not make it home that day. It was the first day of 2016 – what should have been a fresh start for the year ahead. But instead, this worker’s life was cut short. He became the first person to die on the job in 2016.

5 Even though the target is to reduce the fatality rate to below 1.8, I want to stress that this is not enough. Last year, 32 marine workers suffered major injuries at work. While the injuries did not result in death, they have left workers with life-changing injuries such as fractures, dislocations or even amputations. Life will never be the same again for these workers and their families. We must do all we can to prevent all injuries, not just deaths, because we owe it to our workers to keep them safe and healthy at work. In the unfortunate event when workers are injured, we need to support them to recover from injury and remain at, or return to work following injury.

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Learnings from Australia

6 I have just returned from leading a tripartite delegation to Australia to learn how our Australia counterparts are able to improve their workplace safety and health performance from a high of 3.0 fatalities per 100,000 workers in 2007 to 1.6 per 100,000 workers in 2015. This is a

much better performance than what we have achieved to date at 1.9 per 100,000 workers in 2015.

7 There are many learnings we can draw from the trip but three things stood out for me. One is the duties placed on corporate officers, including CEOs and Board of Directors, in exercising due diligence to ensure workplace safety and health. The Australia Work Health and Safety Act detailed 6 duties that corporate officers need to fulfil in discharging their responsibilities on workplace safety and health. These include, for example, understanding the legislative requirements, ensuring the operational plan identify the hazards and risks, providing adequate resourcing to manage workplace safety and health and verifying the presence of an audit system. This has helped to inject WSH discussions into the Board Room and elevate overall awareness of WSH across companies in Australia.

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8 Two, I am impressed with how the industry comes together to take ownership in enhancing workers' workplace safety and health competencies. In the construction sector, for example, the Master Builders Association invested close to A\$15 million to set up a Building Leadership Simulation Centre. The Simulation Centre uses state-of-the-art simulation technology to create an immersive virtual worksite to sharpen the

decision-making, problem-solving, communication and leadership skills of site supervisors and project managers. This has led to an improvement in their construction safety performance, from 5.8 per 100,000 workers in 2003 to 3.2 per 100,000 workers in 2015.

9 Third, when a worker is injured, there is a strong emphasis on helping the worker Return to Work, rather than focusing on compensation. They adopted a holistic and long term treatment of an injured worker by facilitating the injured worker's integration back into the workforce. Employers are required to put in place an injury management system including return-to-work programme. This has helped to improve health outcomes of injured workers and reduce employers' insurance premiums and compensation pay-outs.

WSH should still be a priority in tough times

10 We will study these learnings carefully for possible application in Singapore. Workplace safety and health need to be a top priority whether it is in good times or tough times because we value and care for our workers. My worry is that workplace safety and health may take a backseat during tough times as companies try to cut cost and take on more projects with fewer workers. This has a ripple effect as companies

are pressured by their clients. Workers are in turn pressured by their employers to complete work, sometimes in an unsafe manner.

11 Hence, I am heartened that major marine companies like Sembcorp Marine and Keppel Offshore & Marine have remain committed to Vision Zero, even in today's tough economic landscape. They are taking the lead with innovative approaches to ensure their workers' safety, health and well-being, and in turn, improve productivity. Let me share some of their efforts.

Sembcorp Marine's WSH efforts

12 Sembcorp Marine has developed an innovation to help workers carry out grinding operations safely and efficiently. The conventional way of grinding elbow pipes is to secure the pipes on to the clamping device.

However, the clamping device is unable to fit various elbow pipe sizes.

Workers had to constantly adjust the elbow pipes to the desired angle for grinding. The elbow pipes could also slip if they are poorly secured to the clamp. All these could lead to hand or finger injuries. At the same time, while operating the grinding machine, workers tend to adopt improper work posture which could lead to back pain in the long run. The grinding sparks produced during the operation might also cause skin burns and irritation if the sparks come into contact with the skin.

13 To address these risks, Sembcorp Marine came up with an innovative solution called the Safe Grinding Work Station. It is able to cater to various sizes of elbow pipes with an easy and secure slot-in access that removes all contact with the pipes during grinding operation. This reduces hand fatigue and eliminates the risk of hand and finger injuries. The work station has a gearbox system which can be adjusted according to the worker's height, thus reducing the risk of back injury. It is also fitted with wheels, allowing workers to move the work station easily. A metal safeguard is also installed to control the exposure of grinding sparks.

14 Not only did the adoption of the Safe Grinding Work Station increase safety, it also improve productivity by reducing the required manpower by over 50%.

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Keppel Offshore & Marine's WSH efforts

15 As for Keppel Offshore & Marine, it adopts a holistic Total Workplace Safety and Health approach by incorporating health and well-being elements in their WSH journey. As part of its Total WSH 2020 strategy, Keppel has put in place initiatives to strengthen its workplace safety and health culture where every individual goes beyond looking out for their own safety and well-being, but also that of their co-workers'.

16 Guided by the belief that a healthy workforce is also a safer workforce, Keppel's yards worldwide organise regular campaigns and workshops to educate workers on how they can keep themselves fit and healthy. Over in Singapore, Keppel Shipyard has set up a Well-being and Support Centre which provides holistic health and medical services, as well as counselling so that workers have an avenue to channel their concerns.

17 To promote personal health and wellbeing among its workforce, I am happy to share that Keppel Shipyard is taking a step further to open a Wellness Gallery next year. I have also accepted Keppel's invite to the opening of their Keppel Wellness Gallery and I look forward to attending. I am glad that safety is a core value in Keppel and its management has taken concerted efforts to look after its employees.

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Help for SMEs

18 Closer to home, marine companies and SMEs can learn from Sembcorp Marine and Keppel Offshore & Marine to do more to help our workers be safer, healthier and more productive. SMEs that are planning to improve workplace safety and health can embark on upgrading initiatives in areas such as productivity and technology innovation. As a

start, SMEs may apply for the Capability Development Grant which helps companies defray up to 70% of qualifying project costs.

Conclusion

19 I've shared some ideas today on how you can improve your workplace safety and health management. I hope you will be inspired to come up with your own. We have about one month to go till the year ends and I hope that no more lives will be lost after today. I call on all of you to step up measures, share good practices and develop initiatives together to raise workplace safety and health standards in the industry. The next time we meet, I look forward to be able to share with you that we have achieved our 1.8 target or even better.

20 With that, I wish you fruitful learning session ahead. Thank you.

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