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**SPEECH BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR MANPOWER (MR SAM TAN)
AT BIZSAFE CONVENTION 2017 AT MAX ATRIA @ SINGAPORE EXPO
ON TUESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2017, 10AM**

Mr Heng Chiang Gnee, Chairman of Workplace Safety and Health Council,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

I am happy to see more than 800 participants here at the annual bizSAFE Convention 2017. The bizSAFE programme was launched a decade ago in 2007 to help companies build strong capabilities in managing workplace safety and health. Since then, the bizSAFE community has grown steadily from 1,900 companies to over 26,000 companies employing 1.33 million workers.

How bizSAFE has helped companies

2 Today, we celebrate the achievements of 23 bizSAFE Awards 2017 recipients. These companies exemplify the management systems that all

companies should consider to provide a safe and healthy workplace. Let me share two examples.

3 First, bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award recipient, Wee Chwee Huat Scaffolding & Construction Pte Ltd. The company regularly undertakes risk assessment of their work activities. One of the risks identified was workers falling and tripping when climbing up and down lorries. To mitigate the risk, the company implemented a “Portable Walk-up Stair Trolley with Rail Guards” for loading and unloading. Not only did this improve safety, it reduced the time taken by 37%. Furthermore, it now takes just 1 instead of 2 workmen to complete the tasks. This is a clear example that safety can be a productivity driver.

4 Second, bizSAFE Partner Award recipient Cushman & Wakefield. Cushman & Wakefield has adopted bizSAFE Level 3 certification as a criteria in their procurement contracts to help nurture safer suppliers. With an annual procurement value of about \$90 million, this will drive more subcontractors and partners to join the bizSAFE community. The company has also provided complimentary bizSAFE Level 1 workshops at its training venue for

their subcontractors and partners. Through their efforts, 80 more companies are now bizSAFE certified.

Impact of WSH on employees and businesses

5 These are just two examples of how bizSAFE companies are committed to good safety and health practices. They understand that it is not just the right thing to do; it also makes business sense.

6 However, 26,000 bizSAFE companies is only a fraction of the 180,000 local SMEs. We need to step up our efforts to get more companies on board. This is important as 66 workers lost their lives at work in 2016, translating to a workplace fatality rate of 1.9 per 100,000 employed persons. Another 13,000 workers¹ suffered from major and minor injuries, such as amputations and fractures.

National Archives of Singapore

7 Just last month, 2 workers lost their lives and 885 workers suffered from major and minor injuries. My heart goes out to these workers and their families. Every workplace death and injury is one too many. They remind us

¹ In 2016, there were 594 major injuries and 12,354 minor injuries.

that we need to do more to work towards Vision Zero. Everyone must adopt the mindset that we can prevent all injuries and ill health at work, and step up efforts to prevent accidents before they happen.

8 I believe all these fatalities and injuries could have been avoided with proper risk management. Our data shows that 60% of these injured workers work in SMEs. While most SMEs in the higher-risk sectors such as construction and marine are already on bizSAFE, the majority of SMEs, particularly those from the wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and business services sectors, are not. Many think that their work environment is not that “risky” and do not see the need to build risk management capabilities. They are wrong. About 40% of the injuries reported in 2016 occur in these workplaces.² We need to reach out to these companies and encourage them to adopt good practices through bizSAFE.

We will adopt a three-pronged approach to do so.

² These workplaces refer to SMEs from the wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and business services sectors.

Helping more companies to embark on their bizSAFE journey

9 First, the WSH Council will actively reach out to SMEs through a new programme named StartSAFE. Trained WSH practitioners will visit 1,000 SMEs in the wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, and business services sectors over the next 12 months to help them identify hazards on site and provide advice to rectify the lapses on the spot. We hope many will then be motivated to join the bizSAFE programme to sustain their journey in creating safe and health workplaces.

10 Second, the WSH Council will be working closely with bizSAFE Partners to get their contractors and partners on board bizSAFE. For example, Lendlease will roll out StartSAFE in their malls starting with 313@somerset. At present, over 70% of the mall's tenants have been engaged to come on board bizSAFE. Parkway Parade will be next. We hope this approach would have a multiplier effect in bringing whole chain of suppliers, clients and subcontractors to join the bizSAFE community.

11 Third, the WSH Council will be enhancing the bizSAFE programme to make it more relevant and up-to-date. For instance, we will incorporate elements of Total WSH into bizSAFE. These include introducing companies

to the benefits of implementing Total WSH, so as to encourage them to take an integrated approach to manage safety, health and well-being in the workplace. We are also working with the Ministry of Home Affairs under the SGSecure initiative to include preparation against security risks such as terrorist attacks, into the bizSAFE framework. The threat of terrorism is very real and it is important that all of us, including our workplaces, are ready and prepared to respond swiftly when it happens. More details on these enhancements to the bizSAFE programme will be shared when ready.

Conclusion

12 I have shared how bizSAFE can help companies improve their safety, health and business. For those who are not on bizSAFE, I hope you will be inspired to join the community. For those already on bizSAFE, I hope you will be able to progress through the bizSAFE programme and help other companies do so as well. Let us work together to prevent all injuries and ill health, and ensure that Singapore's workplaces are safe, healthy and secure.