

**EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**  
**PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**SPEECH BY MR SAM TAN, MINISTER OF STATE, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, MINISTRY OF MANPOWER AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AT CONSTRUCTION SAFETY, HEALTH AND SECURITY CAMPAIGN @ e2i (EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY INSTITUTE) ON TUESDAY, 6 JUNE 2017 AT 9.00AM**

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Mr Kenneth Loo, President of the Singapore Contractors Association Limited (or SCAL),

Mr Lee Kay Chai, Chairman of SCAL's Workplace Safety and Health

Committee and Campaign Organising Committee,

Distinguished speakers and guests,

Industry partners, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

1 I am happy to join you again this year for the launch of  
SCAL's annual Construction Safety, Health and Security  
Campaign.

**WSH Performance in the Construction Sector**

2 At last year's event, I sounded my deep concern on the

deteriorating WSH performance in the construction sector. There were 17 fatalities in the construction sector in the first half of 2016 and if the trend continues, we were projected to end 2016 with a workplace fatality rate of 6.8 per 100,000 employed persons for the sector. Thanks to the collective effort by all of you, we managed to arrest the deterioration. Fatalities in the construction sector declined by 59%<sup>1</sup> in the second half of 2016 and we ended the year with a sector fatality rate of 4.9 per 100,000 employed persons, the lowest since 2007. The strong support by SCAL played a big part in this improvement. SCAL worked tirelessly to conduct regular Safety Time-outs with its members. SCAL even sponsored WSH Council's "Look. Think. Do." Campaign to produce pictogram packs showing simple steps that construction workers can take to prevent injuries.

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- 3 This momentum of improvement continued through the first quarter of 2017. The construction sector saw 1 fatality, compared to the average of 6 fatalities per quarter of 2016. As a result, the 12-month rolling fatality rate in the

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<sup>1</sup> The construction sector had 17 fatalities in the first half of 2016, as compared to 7 in the second half of 2016.

construction sector has dropped further to 3.4<sup>2</sup> as of end March. Once again, thank you for your efforts in keeping our construction sites safe!

- 4 Let us strive to do even better. At the Construction Workplace Safety and Health Leadership Summit in 2015, leaders from the construction sector pledged to reduce the sector's fatality rate by at least 25% each year, in order to achieve a target of less than 1.8 by 2018. Based on a linear projection, this roughly translates to a fatality rate of 2.3 this year for us to be on track. Let us press on with our efforts to prevent the next workplace accident. Workers' lives are at stake; their safety and health must come first before any work begin.

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## **Tackling key WSH areas in construction sector**

- 5 Although we saw a reduction in fatalities, major injuries in construction remained the highest across the sectors in 2016. There were 153 major injuries in the whole of 2016 and 21 in the first quarter of 2017. Falls from heights and

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<sup>2</sup> From 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

struck by moving vehicles were still the leading causes of these injuries.

6 We will need to work harder to tackle key areas of concern in the construction sector. First, falls prevention, which I had announced as a priority area for the Programme-based Engagement (ProBE) Plus 2017. We need to double our efforts to address falls hazards associated with common work activities in the construction sector, such as working from ladders and on structures.

7 This is why MOM will more than triple the Mobile Work at Heights programme from 80 visits in 2016 to 300 in 2017. Under this programme, WSH professionals will visit construction worksites to provide onsite practical assistance and guidance on tackling work at heights hazards. For example, by identifying areas for guardrails installation to prevent falling, developing awareness programmes to remind workers to maintain 3-point contact when using ladders, or making site changes to provide proper access and egress. The aim is to build capabilities by equipping

supervisors and workers with the knowledge and skills in implementing measures to ensure safe work at heights. I urge the industry to sign up for the programme when the next round of visits open in July. MOM will also conduct an inspection operation targeting work at heights activities this month. But don't wait until our inspectors come before making improvements to your work site!

- 8 The WSH Council has also produced various educational materials such as videos and an e-learning module to raise awareness and educate industry on falls prevention. I encourage management and workers to make use of these materials and sign up for forums organised by the WSH Council to learn more about various measures to prevent falls.

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- 9 The second area of concern is onsite vehicular safety. In 2016 alone, 12 workers were hit and killed by moving vehicles within workplaces – of which 6 were from the construction sector. Accidents like these can be prevented, if there were clearly demarcated routes to separate workers

from vehicles and drivers checked their blind spots before reversing. Companies need to identify the potential risks when using vehicles within the work premises. MOM will launch an onsite compliance assistance programme called “Managing Onsite Vehicular Safety” or “MOVEs” in short in August. Under the programme, WSH consultants will visit and assess the work premises to raise awareness and guide employers on traffic safety management within their workplaces. This will help companies to better manage the risks associated with the movement and operation of vehicles at work. More details on the programme will be shared in due course.

10 The third area I want to highlight is safe lifting operations. In

the first 5 months of 2017, we had 7 Dangerous Occurrences involving the use of cranes. Half of these cases occurred in the construction sector. I remember a case in December where a mobile crane collapsed and struck 2 adjacent buildings. At the time of the accident, the crane was lifting a concrete bucket when it lost its stability. Although there were no injuries, such crane incidents can

have a catastrophic impact on the safety of not only workers, but also the people nearby. From ensuring that outriggers are fully extended to balancing and rigging the load securely, lifting operations must be carried out safely and properly. To raise awareness of hazards in lifting operations and guide industry on good practices, the National Crane Safety Taskforce under the WSH Council will be producing a video on the preventive steps to take during lifting operations. These include the clear delineation of roles in the lifting team and conducting pre-lifting checks. We urge companies to tap on various crane safety guides available on the WSH Council website, and make use of the new video when it is ready.

**Need for ownership to improve WSH outcomes**

11 These initiatives that I have shared will be in vain without ownership at the industry and ground level. Hence, I am glad that SCAL is taking the lead in spearheading safety and health efforts in the construction sector. I understand that as part of SCAL's Construction Safety Promotion Campaign this month, SCAL has rallied its members to

organise a series of safety awareness activities such as safety talks and in-house campaigns, involving top management, at their worksites. SCAL had even produced its own mobile application for site supervisors to learn more about safe practices at worksites. The app covers topics such as work at heights, electrocution and traffic management and features visuals that depict actual situations onsite that workers can relate to. This proactive spirit demonstrated by SCAL is encouraging and something we would like to see among companies as well.

## **Conclusion**

12 Before I conclude, I would like to invite all of you to join us at the 21<sup>st</sup> World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. It will be held in Southeast Asia for the first time, and Singapore is hosting it in September this year. Do visit the Congress booth to find out more about the event.

13 While the construction sector's fatality rate target of less than 1.8 per 100,000 workers by next year may seem like a



tall order, it is not impossible to achieve if we set our hearts and minds to it. In line with this year's National WSH Campaign message, "Prevent all injuries. Go home safe and healthy", injuries affect not just us but our loved ones too. It is up to each of us to take the initiative in being more vigilant of our surroundings, assess the work situation and take steps to address the work hazard. Collectively, we can work towards preventing all injuries.

- 14 With that, I wish SCAL success in your campaign and for all to have an enriching day ahead.

Thank you.

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