



OS+H Asia 2010

The 7th Occupational Safety + Health Exhibition for Asia

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- **Regional, local initiatives focus on OSH**
- **Support and programmes for SMEs to boost demand for health and safety solutions**
- **OSH can boost bottom line, say participants and promoters**

Southeast Asia continues to play a leading role as a manufacturing and servicing base for a variety of industries spanning aerospace, automotive, chemicals, petroleum, and precision engineering to name a few. Furthermore, fast-growing local economies are working rapidly to construct modern infrastructure and accommodation for a 600-million plus population. It comes as no surprise that OS+H Asia 2010 is more than ever a show of extreme relevance to the region.

To be held from 15 to 17 September 2010, OS+H Asia 2010 returns to Singapore at a juncture when safe and healthy work practices in Asia are coming under the global spotlight. The Decent Work Agenda from the International Labor Organization, (ILO), for example, includes healthy and safe working conditions as one of its strategic objectives and this is especially relevant to the region given it is approaching the mid-point of the Asian Decent Work Decade, which runs from 2006 to 2015. The Agenda targets full productive and decent employment by 2015, with stakeholders such as governments, employer groups, and workers' associations committed to the course. The ILO estimates that 1 million workers in Asia die annually from work-related accidents and illnesses.

Homing in on 1.8 fatality rate

Closer to home, while Singapore has succeeded in lowering its workplace fatality rate from 4.9 per 100,000 employees in 2004 to 2.8 in 2008, the rate inched up to 2.9 in 2009. This is a sign that Singapore will continue to face challenges and will need to push the boundaries to further improve its WSH performance, and stay on course to reach its long term goal of bringing its workplace fatality rate below 1.8 by 2018. This will require investment by stakeholders in OSH initiatives and solutions.

The construction and marine sectors accounted for 63% of Singapore's workplace fatalities last year and sectoral plans have been developed for these two high risk sector to guide them in

implementation of the WSH 2018 Masterplan. These plans have set a target of reducing the fatality rates in these two sectors by 50% by 2013, and eventually bring them below 1.8 by 2018.

Malaysia and Thailand target improvements

According to the latest available data from Malaysia's Human Resources Ministry, industrial accidents claimed 1,300 lives in 2008. Social Security Organisation data, meanwhile, points to over 1,000 work-related fatalities in 2007, with 38,657 work-related accidents also reported. More recent data based on investigated cases indicates no significant improvement in the past two years. The Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOHS) investigated accidents involving 224 fatalities in 2009 versus 230 in 2008 and 219 in 2007. This reflects an urgent need to implement OSH measures in the country.

For its part, Thailand is committed to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda objectives. This should ensure it continues the initiatives with the Second Master Plan on OSH or SAFEWORK THAILAND (2007-2011) which focuses on reducing occupational accidents and diseases.

Heightened safety

Singapore has also introduced a new Code of Practice for Working Safely at Height based on recommendations from a National Work at Height Safety Taskforce while plans are also in the pipeline for national standards such as minimum training hours for workers, maintenance levels, and emergency plans. Height is a factor in almost 30% of work-related fatalities in Singapore. Furthermore, a revised Code of Practice for the safe use of mobile cranes has also been legislated. In addition, WSH (Confined Spaces) Regulations came into force in Singapore in November 2009. The WSH Council has also developed a Technical Advisory on Work in Confined Spaces in consultation with the industry. These initiatives are more examples of developments that will promote demand for OSH solutions.

SME's the next frontier for OSH solutions: 150,000 potential customers

Increased investment in OSH initiatives is imminent in Singapore and the ripple effect may indeed be felt more widely throughout ASEAN. Whereas multinational corporations have in the past been at the forefront of companies focused on occupational safety and health issues in the region, stakeholders realise that an all-encompassing approach is required in order to ensure the safety and health of those more vulnerable workers in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly those serving sectors of relatively high danger such as construction, chemicals and marine. Case in point: More than six in 10 of those who died or were hurt on the job in Singapore in 2009 worked in SMEs.

To this end, Singapore has inaugurated the bizSAFE initiative through its WSH Council. The core theme of bizSAFE is that **"A safe and healthy business is a productive and profitable business."** **With 150,000 SMEs operating in Singapore, the potential for growth in OSH solutions is indeed massive** given that only a fraction of them had signed up by the end of 2009.

Profiting from OSH

Logistics and engineering company Sankyu, attributed a 10-15% growth in its business to its participation in the bizSAFE programme. Further, Mr. Kevin Teoh, deputy executive director of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, has been quoted as saying that although bizSAFE is not mandatory, SMEs will have a greater chance of securing business from big companies that are looking for safer contractors. They can also enjoy lower work-injury compensation insurance rates. According to a pilot study entitled "Return on Prevention" by German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), accident prevention measures do in fact improve productivity. They reduce production stoppages, remove the need to replace and retrain injured staff and result in better staff satisfaction. In fact, the study estimated that every \$1 invested in workplace safety and health, or WSH prevention measures, produced economic returns of \$1.60! Increasing numbers of companies in ASEAN are starting to realize the benefits of proper WSH and implementing appropriate programs.

About OS+H Asia 2010

OS+H Asia 2010 is held for the seventh time in Singapore and is organized by Messe Düsseldorf Asia. The exhibition which champions work safety and health is supported by Singapore's Ministry of Manpower, Work Safety and Health (WSH) Council, Occupational and Environmental Health Society, National Safety Council of Singapore, Singapore Institution of Safety Officers, Singapore Exhibition & Convention Bureau and Messe Düsseldorf GmbH – organizer of A+A, the world's largest trade fair for safety, security and health at work. Some 150 international and regional exhibitors from 20 countries and over 5,000 visitors are expected to be at OS+H Asia 2010.

Held concurrently with OS+H Asia is

- The Singapore WSH Conference on 15 & 16 September 2010. The conference, organized by the Work Safety and Health Council and Ministry of Manpower, is expected to draw some 600 participants, ranging from CEOs, senior government officials to WSH professionals. More information on the conference can be found at www.singaporewshconference.sg
- MEDICAL FAIR ASIA from 15 to 17 September 2010. This is Asia's largest and most successful exhibition on hospital, diagnostic, pharmaceutical, medical and rehabilitative equipment and supplies. Held for the 8th time in Singapore, the exhibition will showcase the best in medical and health care equipment, solutions and services from some 400 exhibiting companies spanning the globe.

For more information on OS+H Asia 2010, please visit www.osha-singapore.com or contact

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