

EA Alert Dated: 01 July 2014

EA Alert: EAs to Remind Employers and Foreign Domestic Workers to Take Note of Safety When Performing Household Chores

This alert is sent to all EAs with Comprehensive (All) licences, which allows you to place out foreign domestic workers (FDWs).

2 In the first half of 2014, four foreign domestic workers (FDWs) have fallen from heights while performing household chores, with three of the accidents occurring back-to-back in June 2014 alone. Of the four injured FDWs, three were cleaning windows, while another was cleaning the glass panel of a balcony.

3 The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) would like to remind all employment agencies (EAs) which place FDWs that they must remind employers to work with their FDW to create a safe working environment in the home. FDWs must be instructed on the dangerous acts which they should avoid, and not be overzealous when performing their duties which could compromise their own safety.

4 Unsafe window cleaning practices was one main cause of FDW fatal falls in 2012, hence, from June 2012, the Work Permit conditions were revised to prohibit FDW employers from requiring their FDWs to clean the window exterior unless the two conditions are met:

- a. The FDW employer, or an adult representative, is physically present to supervise the FDW; and,
- b. Window grilles have been installed and are locked at all times during the cleaning process.

The rules apply to all homes, except for windows that are at the ground level or along common corridors.

5 In accordance with Section 13(A) of the EA Licence Conditions for Comprehensive Licence, prior to the deployment of the FDW to the prospective employers' homes, EAs need to ensure that the safety agreement between the employer and FDW is explained, agreed, signed and retained by both parties. This agreement is to ensure that both employers and FDWs are aware of and understand MOM's requirements when cleaning window exterior. EAs who fail to facilitate the safety agreement will face a fine up to \$5,000 and/or imprisoned up to 6 months.

6 Besides window cleaning, the hanging of laundry is another household chore which is a cause of FDW falls. EAs must remind FDWs to practise the safety guidelines taught to them at the SIP when they clean windows, hang laundry out to dry or bring the laundry back in.

7 For FDWs who are working in Singapore for the first time, it is inevitable that they are anxious and may suffer from homesickness being away from their loved ones. EAs must encourage FDWs to

give themselves time to learn and adapt, and should they feel stressed and unable to cope, they should speak to their employer or EA. EAs should provide their contacts to FDWs for them to call in times of need. FDWs should not do anything that would cause harm to themselves.

8 The Ministry would greatly appreciate if EAs could emphasise to employers and FDWs the importance of safety in the household, and the dire consequences should FDWs not heed the safety aspects when performing household chores.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

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