

## **FACTSHEET ON TOTAL WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH**

### **Background**

Traditionally, organisations tend to focus more on tackling workplace safety hazards as compared to workplace health hazards. However, it is important to recognise that good workplace health is equally important as it affects a worker's wellbeing and in turn, his capacity to work. These issues of employee health, safety and wellbeing are interconnected and hence, an integrated approach is needed to better protect workers' health and safety.

### **Objectives**

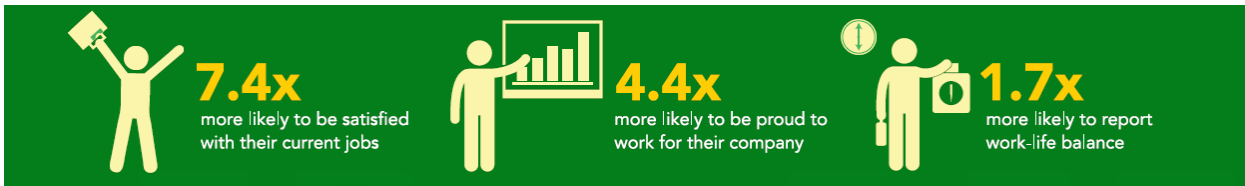
To encourage employers to manage safety and health holistically, the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council, together with Ministry of Manpower will promote a new approach, called "Total WSH"<sup>1</sup>. Total WSH involves a proactive, comprehensive and integrated assessment of all workplace risks – from employee's safety, health to wellbeing. The approach recognises that work affects health and vice versa, and both employees and employers should collaborate in a continuous improvement process to reduce risks thoroughly.

### **Benefits of adopting a holistic approach**

In 2012, MOM commissioned a study on the holistic WSH management of 30 companies. Based on the profile of each company, intervention programmes relating to office ergonomics, weight management and smoking cessation were then implemented in the companies. The study showed that employees of the companies where WSH was managed more comprehensively were:

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<sup>1</sup> Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Manpower, Mr Hawazi Daipi first mentioned the need to adopt an integrated or Total WSH approach during the Committee of Supply 2014 on 7 March.

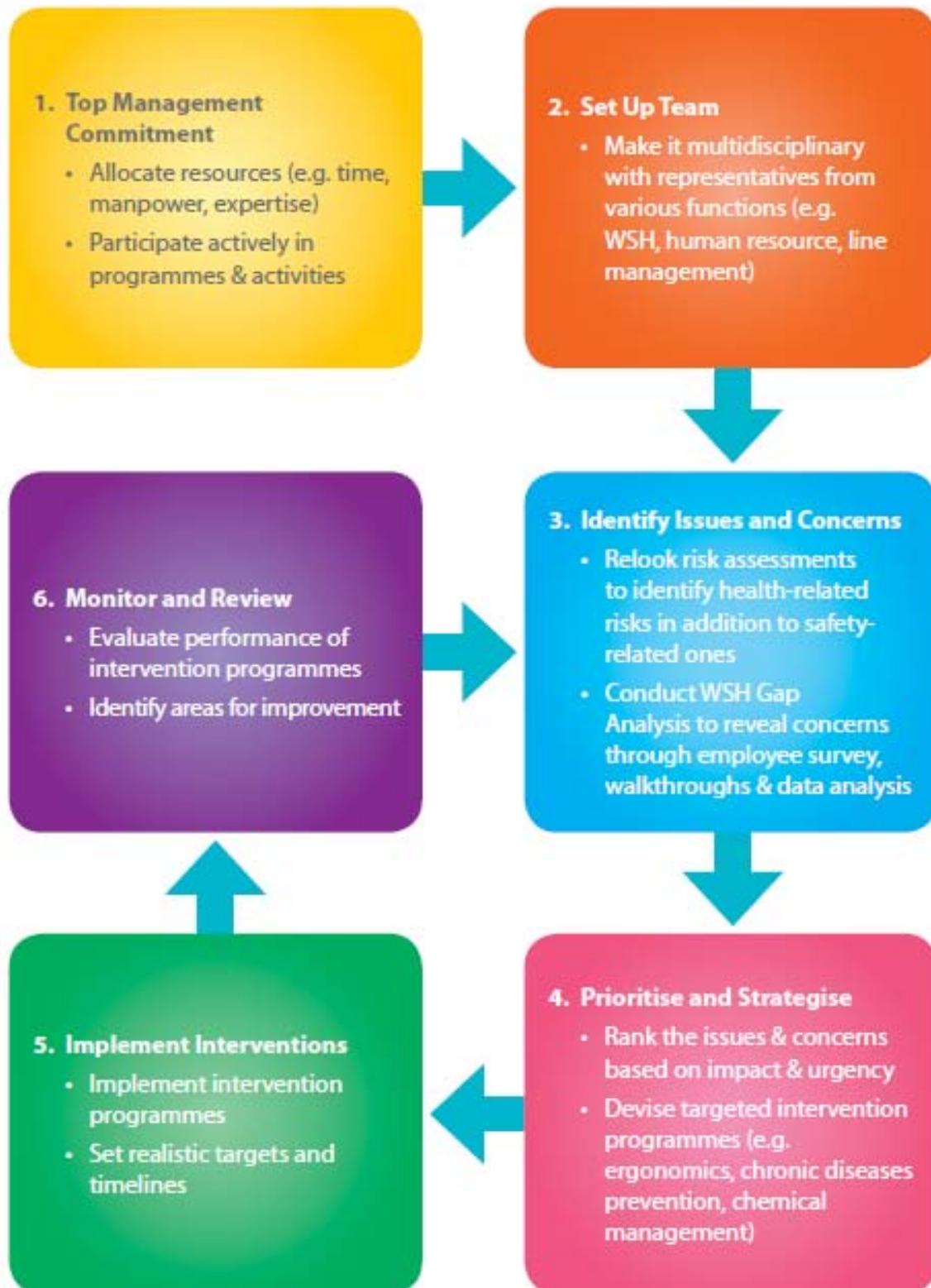


For more information, visit [www.wshc.sg](http://www.wshc.sg)

**Development of *Guide to Total WSH***

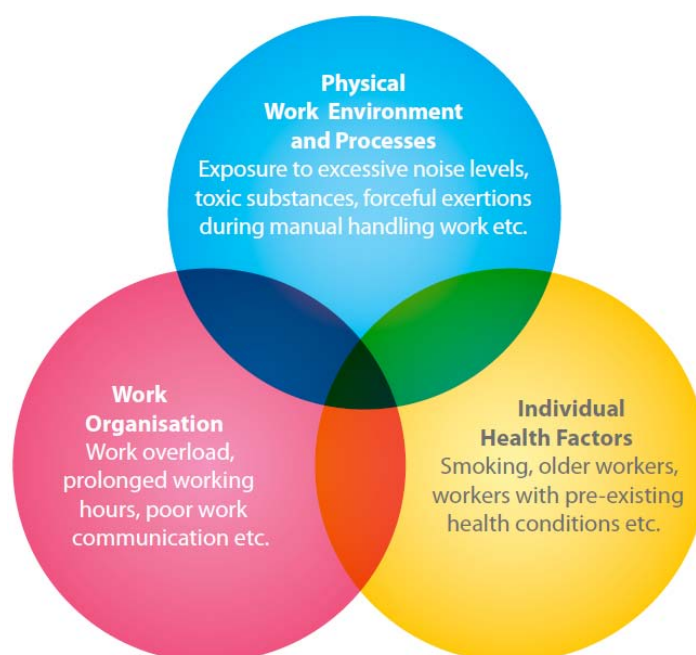
To support employers in implementing Total WSH, the WSH Council, MOM and the Health Promotion Board have jointly developed a *Guide to Total WSH*. The new guide outlines a six-step process to implement the Total WSH approach (please see Annex A(i)), illustrates a holistic approach to risk assessment (please see Annex A(ii)) and provides recommendations about systematically managing and improving the safety, health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace. The guide is available for download at the WSH Council website at [www.wshc.sg](http://www.wshc.sg).

## Implementing Total WSH



## **Holistic Risk Assessment**

A key feature of Total WSH is that it takes a holistic approach to risk assessment (RA). In addition to hazard identification, risk evaluation and implementation of risk controls, a holistic RA includes the consideration of risks from these three aspects (see diagram):



### **Physical work environment and processes**

Hazards in the physical work environment and processes can result in physical harm to persons, causing death, disability, injury and/or ill health. Examples of these hazards are:

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Physical</b>   | Mechanical aspects (energised equipment, moving parts, machinery, equipment, etc.), working at heights, exposure to excessive noise levels, ionising and non-ionising radiation, etc. |
| <b>Chemical</b>   | Exposure to hazardous substances, flammable materials, toxic substances, etc.   |
| <b>Electrical</b> | Contact with exposed cables, live wires, etc.   |
| <b>Ergonomics</b> | Manual handling, manual lifting, awkward postures, forceful exertions, repetitive movements, work with visual display units, etc.   |
| <b>Biological</b> | Infectious agents, viruses, bacteria, etc.  |

After hazards in the physical work environment and processes have been identified, organisations should also consider the possibility of exposure to hazards from other work processes in the vicinity.

### **Work organisation**

Work organisation refers to how work is structured within the organisation and how the organisation is managed. Tasks could be organised so that underlying causes of unsafe behaviour and ill health are reduced, and work can be carried out safely.

### **Individual health risk factors**

The individual health risk factors of employees should also be considered when conducting RAs, as these factors may cause them to be more affected by the work environment, processes and organisation.

## **Total WSH Gap Analysis**

To conduct a comprehensive Total WSH gap analysis of workplace issues (e.g. accident, ill health, near misses, days away from work), the interconnections among the physical work environment and processes, work organisation and employees, are analysed for underlying causes and possible associations with work factors. The analysis also includes looking across similar processes, conditions and situations to identify systemic and underlying causes as well as threats to the organisation.

A Total WSH Gap Analysis comprises seven steps:

### **i) Data Collection**

Take stock of existing data collected from all sources such as in-house incident reporting systems, aggregated health screening data, diseases and ill health records and WSH monitoring data.

### **ii) Baseline Analysis**

Analyse the data looking for patterns and trends across departments, occupations, demographics, work processes etc. Correlate trends and patterns broadly with presence of health risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

### **iii) Employee Survey**

Bridge gaps where there is missing data through focus group discussions and employee surveys. Conduct periodic health screening for staff to get a better idea of their health profiles. Use the basic health survey<sup>2</sup> to supplement health screening data or as an alternative screening tool.

### **iv) Walkthrough Survey**

Verify trends and findings by walking through the work processes and talking to employees about issues at hand. Check if risk control measures implemented are adequate and effective.

### **v) Evaluate findings and suggest improvements**

Evaluate outcomes of RA and gap analysis (items (i) to (iv)) and recommend improvements and prioritise actions.

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<sup>2</sup> A sample basic health survey questionnaire can be downloaded from the *Guide to Total WSH* at [www.wshc.sg](http://www.wshc.sg)

vi) Communicate findings

Communicate the findings of the gap analysis and encourage employee feedback and participation in programmes. Discuss findings at joint platforms where employees, managers, human resource and WSH personnel can participate and share their views and ideas for improving the situation.

vii) Act on recommendations

Prioritise and implement recommendations or solutions.

## **FACTSHEET ON VISION ZERO**

### **About Vision Zero**

The term “Vision Zero” gained prominence in the late 1990s when the Ministry of Transport in Sweden adopted the basic tenets of the zero-accident philosophy – that it is ethically unacceptable for people to be killed or seriously injured on the roads. Based on this zero-tolerance philosophy, Sweden implemented various changes through tighter legislative requirements, road infrastructure improvements and technological improvements. These include establishing highly sensitive built-in alcohol sensors and adaptive cruise control to maintain a safe distance between vehicles. By 2011, Sweden had one of the lowest number of overall traffic fatalities per capita in the world.

### **Why we are interested in Vision Zero**

There has been growing international interest in adopting the Vision Zero policy to drive improvements in WSH outcomes, as seen in countries including Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, USA, Finland and Korea.

Finland started a “Zero Accident Forum” since 2003, which consists of a voluntary network of companies sharing a common vision of becoming leaders in safety. The Forum provides a platform for various companies to share their WSH experiences with one other, organises site visits, and provides seminars, materials and tools such as campaigns and websites. By 2012, more than 280 organisations have joined the Forum, employing a total of 300,000 workers (more than 10% of the Finnish working population). Many member companies have seen significant safety improvements in their workplaces over time.

### **Plans towards Vision Zero**

Since April 2013, the WSH Institute has initiated the WSH Stakeholders’ dialogue on the topic of Vision Zero through various industry and functional committees, taskforces and workgroups. So far, the views of more than 150 business leaders across different industries have been sought. The preliminary findings show that 90% of business leaders polled thus far have affirmed that Vision Zero is the right mindset to adopt. The WSH Institute will continue to explore and study what Vision Zero can mean for Singapore as we look to embark on the next frontier towards WSH excellence, including learning from the experiences of other countries in their journey towards Vision Zero.



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON VISION ZERO**

### **1. What is Vision Zero?**

The term “Vision Zero” gained prominence in the late 1990s when the Ministry of Transport in Sweden adopted the basic tenets of the zero-accident philosophy – that it is ethically unacceptable for people to be killed or seriously injured on the roads.

Today, the term Vision Zero can have several different interpretations: an aspirational target, a philosophy, a guiding principle, a national strategy, an expression of commitment, even a performance target. It can be qualitative such as in the form of an approach or mindset, or it can be a concrete quantitative target. Ultimately, Vision Zero is based on the core beliefs that no loss of life is acceptable and all accidents are preventable.

### **2. What are some experiences of countries which have adopted Vision Zero?**

Sweden is one of the first countries which adopted Vision Zero. In the late 1990s, the Ministry of Transport in Sweden adopted the basic tenets of the zero-accident philosophy – that it is ethically unacceptable for people to be killed or seriously injured on the roads. Based on this zero-tolerance philosophy, Sweden implemented various changes through tighter legislative requirements, road infrastructure improvements and technological improvements. These include establishing highly sensitive built-in alcohol sensors and adaptive cruise control to maintain a safe distance between vehicles. By 2011, Sweden had one of the lowest number of overall traffic fatalities per capita in the world.

Another example is Finland, where a “Zero Accident Forum” started since 2003, which consists of a voluntary network of companies sharing a common vision of becoming leaders in safety. The Forum provides a platform for various companies to share their WSH experiences with one other, organises site visits, and provides seminars, materials and tools such as campaigns and websites. By 2012, more than 280 organisations have joined the Forum, employing a total of 300,000 workers (more than 10% of the Finnish working population). Many member companies have seen significant safety improvements in their workplaces over time.

In Singapore, the Land Transport Authority introduced their Zero Accident Movement a year ago for infrastructure building and a number of private contractors have adopted “Zero Accidents” as a key component of their own activities. It aims to tighten the safety processes of its contractors by increasing its surprise onsite safety

checks, upgrade its safety, health and environment standards, and also raise safety education and awareness<sup>3</sup>.

### 3. How is Vision Zero relevant to Singapore?

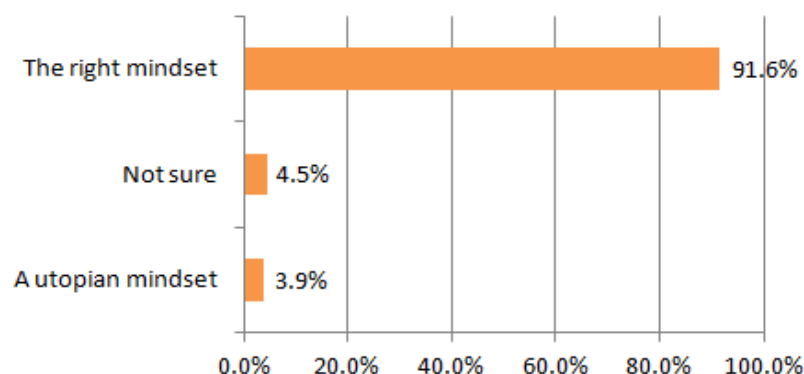
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### 4. The WSH Institute has been consulting the industry on the topic of Vision Zero. What are some findings so far?

In April 2013, the WSH Institute initiated the WSH Stakeholders' dialogue on the topic of Vision Zero through various industry and functional committees, taskforces and workgroups. So far, more than 150 business leaders across different industries have been engaged to seek their insights and perspectives on Vision Zero. Some preliminary findings are:

- 92% of business leaders think that Vision Zero is the right mindset to adopt (Chart 1)

Chart 1: Perception on Vision Zero



- 42% of business leaders feel that Vision is an aspirational goal (Chart 2)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltaweb/en/industry-matters/safety-and-health-and-environment/construction-safety-and-environment/zero\\_accident\\_movement0.html](http://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltaweb/en/industry-matters/safety-and-health-and-environment/construction-safety-and-environment/zero_accident_movement0.html)

Chart 2: What does Vision Zero mean to you?



**5. How will Vision Zero affect the industry? I.e. How does MOM/ WSHC/ WSH Institute intend to implement Vision Zero (e.g. any legislation, specific schemes etc)?**

Vision Zero is not a radical new concept. The belief that no loss of life is acceptable is already one that we embrace. The WSH Institute will continue the stakeholders' dialogue to understand the industry's perceptions and any concerns on Vision Zero. An internal MOM workgroup will also be set up to explore and study what Vision Zero can mean for Singapore as we look to embark on the next frontier towards WSH excellence, including learning from the experiences of other countries in their journey towards Vision Zero.

**6. Why talk about Vision Zero? It is unattainable in the first place. Why even bother to try?**

There are of course some critics on Vision Zero. Some say it is impossible to attain, due to the inherent risks in the nature of the industry and work. Some say it is too ambitious and will cause us to become disheartened and disillusioned when we see ourselves failing to meet the goal year after year. Others say it will discourage the reporting of injuries in order to keep up a false appearance of zero injuries.

When Vision Zero was first adopted in Sweden in the area of road safety in the late 1990s, it was also met with some criticism. Yet, ten years later, Sweden has one of the lowest number of traffic fatalities per capita in the world. The philosophy of Vision Zero is now being replicated across various countries in various areas.

Ultimately, talking about Vision Zero is meaningless if it is merely a new vision statement or topic of debate. What is more important is what we will do differently from now. The outcome we achieve will only be as good as the efforts we took to reach it.