Notable Comments by IAP Members

Comments about managing construction safety and health upstream

"The challenges in construction safety can be alluded to the supply chain. Most building projects have a chain of subcontractors. While you might be able to achieve some progress with the head contractor of a project, how would you make sure that the safe practices permeate through to the sub-contractors? In Australia, it is a requirement that they demonstrate performance in this area. To complement this, the industry also has a practice model, where a good company demonstrates for other companies how they've gone about improving safety and health. There has been some success in doing this, and it is a possible strategy for Singapore's construction industry to adopt." – Mr Rex Hoy

"In the construction industry, using financial drivers as motivators is quite important. The altruistic argument that you have the responsibility for safety is only one part of the argument for safety. If you drive your contractors to bid at the lowest price, they will cut corners. You're not going to get the quality that you want delivered to time. This is the economic argument. But if at the beginning, you can get the design of the overall project right and set the right culture and expectations of contractors, your efforts will get real traction and you will be able to deliver the project on time, within budget and without harming anybody. Cultural change takes time. The roots of the UK's construction safety performance started years ago, when Government initiatives were looking at the quality and efficiency of construction, and not just workplace safety and health. We built on that debate, and top leaders of the industry met at a ministerial summit to commit to improve safety and health performance. The regulator also sought to work in partnership with the industry to get the culture and expectations right. Eventually, clients would not engage contractors unless they bought into a safe culture, and contractors would not take on sub-contractors unless they bought into it too. That changed the safety culture over time, and influenced the way business is done today in large sections of the industry. But you need to underpin this approach with a legislative framework that brings in clients, developers and architects to manage safety upstream. And that was what the UK's Construction Design and Management Regulations were about. Through a set of regulations, we've changed the safety and health attitudes and performance at the procurement and design end of the supply chain and this will make it easier for the construction phase to manage health and safety risks." – Mr Kevin Myers

"The construction sector is so heterogeneous, with so many types of actors and some of these are the small construction companies that are really difficult to manage. So it's a very challenging thing to improve their safety standards. What we found in Finland was that while law was important, and its implementation was even more important, strengthening the safety culture was what improved accident rates.

In the 1990s, Finland's construction industry benefited from a strong safety culture that Swedish construction companies brought in. This had a dramatic impact on Finland's accident rates and the work got much safer because of the strong safety culture that developed." – Prof Jorma Rantanen

"One approach worth considering is an incentive scheme where the insurance premium of work injury compensation insurance programmes are increased or reduced at the industry level based on safety and health performance. This has already been implemented in Japan and it is one scheme that Singapore can utilise." – Prof Ken Takahashi

Quotes about Total WSH

"I would like to congratulate Singapore for embarking on a comprehensive programme in safety and health. It is timely that we address this issue now. The accident rates provide the argument for new initiatives – Singapore has come to a point in its safety development where the "curve is levelling off", and there is a need to innovate in order to make an impact, because the industries still have risks but stakeholders may have grown resistant towards our WSH efforts. Thus, a comprehensive WSH strategy is very important." – Prof Jorma Rantanen

"In many countries, large Multi-National Corporations have adopted Total WSH, but the difficulty is in reaching the SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) and the high-risk sectors like construction. One best practice to help the SMEs is to ask large companies to reach out to all of their collaborating companies. This has been done all over the world. To help high-risk sectors like construction, Singapore can define national safety and health goals for crucial projects so that companies have a goal of zero fatal accidents from the beginning." – Dr Walter Eichendorf

"Companies need to own the approach of Total WSH and believe that it will add value to their overall business strategy. They need to develop their own KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to assure senior management of the progress. The implementation of Total WSH is broad based, holistic and to an extent philosophical. It is sometimes more difficult for businesses to deliver Total WSH, as opposed to fixing discrete issues or problems, but this should not stop companies from adopting the Total WSH approach. " – Mr Kevin Myers

"Ultimately, the successful involvement and commitment of both employers and employees are key. In particular, the management must accept the business case for Total WSH, and that there is indeed return-on-investment, although to this end, more innovation and persuasive indicators need to be developed. For ultimate success, governments should also give much higher priority to the said goals and concepts than there already are." – Prof Ken Takahashi

"The key success factors for companies adopting and implementing Total WSH approach would be reflected in their performance such as reduction in fatalities and injuries, less lost days from work, improved productivity, improved leadership and culture. These are useful to measure the success of national actions. While larger companies are better able to handle the implementation of Total WSH, many small businesses may need considerable assistance to do so." – Mr Rex Hoy

Comments about Vision Zero

"Although not easy, it is probably best to discuss a culture of prevention in Singapore and involve the whole government and all stakeholders in this discussion. One of the strategic elements of the culture of prevention would be Vision Zero. The Vision Zero mindset to prevent "all work injuries and ill health" is new to Singapore. It is a challenge, but it is well placed at the mid-point of the WSH 2018." – Dr Walter Eichendorf

"Measuring change in values is very difficult, but it is important. You will need to develop leading rather than just lagging indicators to measure changes in culture. I think that Vision Zero explains the concept at an intellectual and philosophical level, and it is a model to drive up performance to help companies get from good to great." – Mr Kevin Myers

"A possible indicator to monitor progress and impact of Vision Zero would be the perception level by the various stakeholders. Reflection in policies at national and enterprise levels can also be assessed to gauge how well the Vision Zero concept has permeated through to the different levels of organisations. The mindset that injuries and diseases are inevitable is pervasive and deep-rooted which cannot be easily changed. Thus, there is room to develop a knowledge base. Singapore should aspire to implement the Vision Zero policy and construct the knowledge base concurrently. The biggest challenge in implementing Vision Zero would be to develop indicators to measure process rather than outcome. " – Prof Ken Takahashi