

EMPLOYMENT AGENCY BULLETIN

News bulletin by the Ministry of Manpower for employment agencies.



TIGHTER SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS

Employers Shall Not Allow FDWs to Clean Window Exterior

There has been a recent spate of foreign domestic workers (FDWs) falling from heights while at work recently. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is deeply concerned over this tragic and unnecessary loss of lives.

With effect from 4 June 2012, employers **shall not allow** their FDWs to **clean window exteriors** except where two conditions are met:

a) The employer or an adult representative of the employer 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 new requirements will apply to all homes, except for windows that are at the ground level or along common corridors.

A Safe Working Environment for FDWs – EAs as a Key Stakeholder

Employment agencies (EAs) should be committed to help FDW employers provide and ensure a safe working environment for their FDWs. This includes helping employers understand and comply with the new tighter requirements on work safety. EAs should minimally:

- Emphasise the new requirements on cleaning of window exterior to employers prior to deployment of their FDWs i.e. the employer or adult representative of employer is physically present to supervise the FDW and window grilles have been installed and are locked at all times during the cleaning process.

- Remind employers that newly arrived FDWs are not used to high-rise living and may be less aware of the risks involved while working at height. Close supervision is required while FDW is at work. FDWs may also be afraid to speak up, or may be too eager to please employers and thus may put themselves in dangerous situations while at work. Employers must keep a close watch on their FDWs when it comes to work safety.
- Go through the Advisory and checklist on FDWs' performance at SIP with employers during deployment.
- Remind employers of their responsibility in ensuring that their FDWs work in a safe manner. Employers should take all necessary steps to eliminate the risks involved in all household chores. They can refer to the *FDW Employer Handy Guidebook* to familiarise themselves with the safety Dos and Don'ts, or to the safety tips at MOM's website at mom.gov.sg/statistics-publications/others/publications,

Penalties

Failure to comply with these tightened requirements is a breach of the Employment of Foreign Manpower (Work Passes) Regulations. Employers who fail to comply may be prosecuted and fine up to \$5,000, or up to six months jail or both. They may also be permanently barred from hiring an FDW. For added deterrence, MOM has plans to double the current penalties, as part of the review of the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act and its subsidiary legislation later this year.

More Information

MOM has announced the new tighter requirements in a media release (mom.gov.sg/newsroom/Pages/PressReleasesDetail.aspx?listid=431), and may refer EAs to the FAQs (mom.gov.sg/Documents/highlights/FAQs.pdf) to better understand the new requirements. We encourage EAs to read through the FAQs, in the event that some of these issues are raised when you are servicing clients.

If there are further queries on FDW safety issues, EAs can email mom_fmmd_cr@mom.gov.sg