

**Welcome Address by Mr Lee Tzu Yang  
Chairman of Workplace Safety and Health Council  
Workplace Safety and Health Awards 2013  
Marina Bay Sands on 30 July 2013, 6 pm**

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Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health and Manpower,

Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Manpower,

Ms Diana Chia, President, National Trades Union Congress,

Fellow Members of the WSH Council and Committees,

WSH Awards Winners,

Industry Partners, Ladies and Gentlemen

**Introduction**

Tonight, we are here to celebrate the achievements of our winners. As in the video earlier, the values that our winners embody make a difference for thousands of workers across Singapore.

2 You will find our latest Annual Report on your dinner table. We have charted our progress over the last five years since our formation as a Council in 2008. 2013 marks the midpoint to our target vision for WSH 2018 and it is timely for us to review the journey.

3 We have chosen the theme of “Change”. Change is always difficult as it carries uncertainty. However if we view change from another perspective, it enables improvement. The circumstances in the mid-2000s that led to the Council’s formation in 2008 meant that change was demanded. Changes were needed and expected in the approach to safety and health. We have chosen to review the Council’s journey through the lens of “change” over the past five years.

## **How did the Council change the way we work?**

4 We formed the Council and set three key roles – to build capability, set standards and engage stakeholders. We established a strong collaborative process in capability building. We worked with our industry committees to review the adequacy of our training courses to better meet the needs of industry. We put in place the necessary infrastructure to deliver training, by leveraging Accredited Training Providers and Approved Training Organisations to establish a training eco-system. We “Trained the Trainers”. Today the landscape for WSH learning is much changed and improved.

5 Similarly for standards, besides consulting stakeholders and partners from industry, we looked at trends in accidents, and scanned international sources to unearth new areas on which to work. In developing any new guideline, the working group will include industry representatives. Additional consultation is done with a network of stakeholders to further refine recommendations for effective implementation. Guidelines are also reviewed regularly to ensure they remain relevant.

6 Our working relationships across industry have also changed and grown. From 100 members, we have now over 300 members in various committees. We have extended coverage from five to nine sectors, including hospitality and facility management. We have links with over 50 associations to help reach their members. Our e-bulletin has 30,000 subscribers, who receive our weekly alerts on case studies and guidance materials. Through these connections, we are able to publicise our messages quickly.

7 By leveraging on these foundations in the last 5 years:

- We now have 15,466 trained WSH professionals, from training just 278 in 2008.
- More than 50 courses were rolled out to train over a million workers.

- With industry backing, more than 270 technical publications were issued to guide our industries.
- We grew the number of bizSAFE companies from 550 to 14,524 companies in 2013.
- The WSH Awards have tripled in participation from 145 applicants in 2008 to 449 applicants this year, of which 91% of the applicants reported zero accidents as compared to 24% in 2012.
- We extended our engagement to new sectors and the public, not only through mass media but also through social media with WSH Nation, games, mobile apps and facebook.
- Our annual campaigns adopted stronger messages. From a neutral message, “Say NO to risks at work”, we asked industry to “Stop the Assumptions. Stop Work Accidents” and now, “This could be YOU”. With the new message, our television commercial, “Assumptions”, struck a chord with the public and clinched us a Bronze award at The Laurels.

8 More is revealed in the Annual Report. The fatality rate, an indicator of how we are doing, reached a low of 2.1 per 100,000 employed workers in 2012.

### **The changes yet to come: Changing mindsets**

9 We can all take pride in the progress but our journey is far from over. The message this year, “Every day, 30 are injured at work. Every week, one dies” tells us as long as there is one worker who does not make it home safe, we need to work harder.

10 At our National WSH Campaign launch in May, the Prime Minister challenged us to set a new direction to reach world class standards. At the Council, we reflected that the easier part was putting the structures in place. Our next step will be harder, as it will involve changing the way people feel, think and act.

### **Mindset change: Employers**

11 For every employer committed to WSH, there are others who are not yet committed. Companies in the services sectors may not consider WSH as a key factor in how they operate, even though they account for 40% of overall work injuries. New companies may put profitability before safety. We need businesses to be forward-looking and understand that implementing safe and healthy work practices helps the business run more smoothly, productively and ultimately, more profitably.

### **Mindset change: Workers**

12 Workers too have to be convinced about WSH. Through reaching out to foreign workers, the Council asked 1,000 workers about their experience with WSH at the workplace. An alarming 50% said that they had been asked to work unsafely. Of these 500 workers, one-third did not take any action to protect themselves, or report the issue. They should be concerned because workers are often the ones who suffer when anything goes wrong. WSH should be on the top of their minds at all times. We would like workers to internalise safety as a personal value, so that they would always choose safety over other considerations. Supervisors and management need to actively support their workers to make this shift in mindset. This is where the emphasis will be, when the Council engages workers.

### **Mindset change: Public**

13 To help achieve a pervasive WSH culture, we have to go beyond the workplace and workforce. WSH affects everyone and it is our personal responsibility to look out for danger, protect ourselves and others who may be affected by our actions. The safety mindset must be entrenched at home and at play, and provide consistency across our lives.

## **Conclusion**

14 Programmes such as CultureSAFE and WSH Advocates are available for industry to tap on to help shape and change mindsets. I am sure all of us are committed to making these changes, and we need your support to help convince others that safer and healthier workplaces are important to both businesses and workers. Let me end here by congratulating the winners and inviting all to stay with us on our journey of change. Thank you.