

# CHAMPIONING WSH STANDARDS ON AN INTERNATIONAL SCALE

(2015–FUTURE)







As Singapore commemorates its 50th year as an independent state, the Occupational Safety and Health Division (OSHD) reflects back on its journey with pride.

Flanked by both challenges and successes, the Division's journey in spearheading Singapore's ever-evolving Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) landscape has been guided by numerous hands – generations of safety champions that carried the Division from one milestone to the next. This has allowed the Division to overcome the many hurdles faced along the way. Despite fielding numerous headwinds, OSHD retains its momentum of aiming for higher and more qualitative standards, at home as well as on the international stage.

From heavy industrialisation to knowledge-driven businesses, the winds of change have transformed Singapore's vocational landscape into a vibrant, multi-sectored terrain. The rise of emerging industries, a diversified workforce and an ageing population also spell the need to cope with new technologies and a more competitive environment.

Amidst these fast-moving times, OSHD remains steadfast to the mission at hand. Regardless of age, nationality or vocation, the belief that everyone has a right to work in a safe and healthy work environment remains a guiding principle. Every individual in Singapore should be able to go home to his or her loved ones – safely and healthily – at the end of the working day. Safeguarding this right is a responsibility that the Division embraces wholeheartedly, and one that has brought about positive change in the WSH landscape.

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*We need to strengthen personal ownership of WSH, where everyone sees WSH as a way of life, taking responsibility for their own safety and health and that of those around them. This is only possible when we believe that every injury and ill-health arising from work is preventable.*

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Er. Ho Siong Hin, Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health and Divisional Director of the Occupational Safety and Health Division

## MOVING TOWARDS INDUSTRY SELF-REGULATION

The shift from a compliance-based to a performance-based approach towards WSH had not been achieved overnight. While some businesses and individuals rose to the occasion without hesitation, some were not fully convinced of the need for WSH.

It took a multi-pronged approach of legislation, policies, education and unfortunately, incidents of devastating tragedies to bring about a culture of shared responsibility. Although it took time and patience, these relentless efforts ultimately produced encouraging results. Under the new paradigm set forth by the WSH reform, OSHD and the industry have been able to make significant progress, reducing fatality rates to 1.8 per 100,000 employed persons in 2014 – four years ahead of the 2018 timeline. Having surpassed that milestone, the Division turned its sights towards a new philosophy: Vision Zero.

LEFT:  
The launch of the WSH Campaign 2015 propagated the Vision Zero mindset that all work injuries and ill-health are preventable.

## ADOPTING A VISION FOR A HEALTHY AND ACCIDENT-FREE WORKPLACE

On the afternoon of 24 April 2015, then Minister for Manpower Mr. Tan Chuan-Jin revealed a new direction for the WSH movement. Dubbed “Vision Zero”, it seeks to inculcate a mindset that all injuries and ill-health at work are preventable.

The Vision Zero mindset first gained prominence in Sweden in 1997 as part of the road safety policy and has since been adopted internationally to drive

improvements in WSH outcomes. Leading countries began to adopt the vision according to their cultures and practices. All did so with the same aim: to prevent injuries and fatalities in the workplace. Singapore is no different. In charting the path forward, Singapore has emulated the Vision Zero model – taking a more proactive attitude towards the prevention of injuries and ailments in the workplace.

To engage the industry in this new mindset, the WSH Institute initiated the WSH Stakeholders’ Dialogue in April 2013, where more than 150 business leaders gave their views on Vision Zero. The preliminary

**BOTTOM:**  
The fourth International Advisory  
Panel meeting in session.





**LEFT:**  
The International Advisory Panel is made up of occupational safety and health officials from different countries, helping to elevate the discussion and nature of WSH on a global scale.

findings were encouraging – more than 90 per cent of business leaders agreed that Vision Zero is the right mindset to adopt.

In 2014, during the fourth meeting of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) International Advisory Panel (IAP) for WSH, IAP offered further key recommendations for Singapore to achieve the Vision Zero mindset. First, the Panel advocated for the importance of leaders as role models in effecting the mindset change. Second, the Panel asserted the need for performance measures to track progress and facilitate regular reviews. Third, early efforts should be focused on achieving support and continued buy-in from the industry by providing a compelling case for Vision Zero. Finally, the benefits of adopting Vision Zero from a moral and economic standpoint should be clearly communicated to the industries.

IAP also drove home an important point: Vision Zero should not be seen as a destination, but rather, a journey. OSHD, together with the WSH Council and the WSH Institute, has begun to develop initiatives to assist industries in turning the Vision Zero mindset into action.

# VISION ZERO

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*We all can make Vision Zero a reality. We need to start young – start from preschool. At preschool, you can stress on simple things like traffic safety, put on your helmet when you cycle, cross the road, and you know, don't jaywalk, simple things like that. And then in schools, safety needs to be in-built into the co-curriculum activities. That's where actually I learnt safety from. I was in boy scouts. When I go camping, I was taught about safety. So, [it] becomes real. Then it becomes part and parcel of the way we do things. It becomes our culture.*

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Dr. Peck Thian Guan, Director, Office of Safety, Health & Environment, National University of Singapore

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*Vision Zero does not start with the number as a target. It starts with a mindset and a belief. It starts with you and me as a caring employer and a family member, doing what we can to prevent injuries and keep healthy. I think we owe it to all of us, and we owe it to all our families to do this. All of us must find our own way of developing that mindset. It is about all of us not letting go of our opportunities to prevent any accidents. Because you never know – a simple accident, a simple slip, can result in serious consequences.*

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Mr. Tan Chuan-Jin, former Minister for Manpower, speech at the launch of the National Workplace Safety and Health Campaign on 24 April 2015



TOP:  
Minister of State for  
Prime Minister's  
Office and Ministry of  
Manpower, Mr. Sam  
Tan, at a construction  
site inspection in  
December 2015.

## AFFIRMING A PATH FOR PROGRESS IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

In the construction industry, where injury and fatality rates remained high, Vision Zero has become an inspiring call to action. The industry leaders' determination to reduce workplace fatality rates was made clear at the Construction WSH Leadership Summit 2015.

Drawing more than 300 participants, the Summit saw construction industry leaders reaffirming their commitment to reduce the workplace fatality rate to less than 1.8 per 100,000 employed persons by 2018. Achieving this target requires a sustained effort. The industry would need to reduce its workplace fatality rate by 25 per cent every year for the next three years.

To realise this goal and set forth toward Vision Zero, the Construction Industry WSH Action Plans 2015 was put together by the industry. The document outlines a set of commitments and plans toward achieving better WSH performance for the built environment together. Six focus areas spanning the life cycle of construction projects are detailed. This encompasses training, culture and practices, leadership, procurement and Design for Safety (DfS).

Within the document, the leaders expressed their pledge to take personal ownership of WSH, demonstrate leadership, work in partnership with all stakeholders, adopt a mindset that no work is worth compromising WSH for, and focus on finding solutions to prevent injuries and ill-health arising from work.

In support of the industry and to realise the action plans, the WSH (Design for Safety) Regulation was gazetted in August 2015 and is set to come into effect in 2016. The roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the construction project will be outlined in the Regulations. Additionally, the Regulations would also be made mandatory for projects with a contract worth S\$10 million or above.

Training is another area where support would be provided. To aid in the implementation of DfS, MOM will work with the industry to train 1,000 DfS professionals by 2018. Existing DfS courses will also be reviewed. Also to be piloted is the Developer & Designer Early Engagement programme, which aims to achieve better WSH outcomes by engaging developers and designers at an earlier stage.

The construction industry would be best-placed to achieve its long-term objectives in achieving significant WSH progress through this comprehensive range of initiatives.

## BENCHMARKING A MAJOR HAZARD INSTALLATION REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AGAINST ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Distinctly, the oil refining and petrochemical industry is one of the largest contributors to Singapore's manufacturing output. Many of these investments comprise facilities classified as major hazard installations (MHIs) because they handle large quantities of toxic and flammable substances in a complex operating environment. The likelihood of a major MHI incident is generally low due to the stringent WSH management system in place. Notwithstanding this, their complex operating environment and high concentration of highly hazardous chemicals mean that any accident can potentially result in catastrophic consequences.

Ensuring the integrity of MHIs is paramount, both to our economy as well as the well-being of our workers and the public. To be in line with international best practices, in May 2013, MOM led a multi-agency study mission with representation from MOM, the Singapore

Civil Defence Force (SCDF), the National Environment Agency (NEA), the Economic Development Board (EDB), Jurong Town Corporation (JTC), the WSH Council and the Singapore Chemical Industry Council to countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. The purpose of the study mission was to allow the taskforce to study how leading countries in WSH manage their MHIs.

Following the study mission, an Inter-Agency Taskforce was established to review the existing MHI regulatory framework to enable better oversight of safety, health and environment risks in the MHI sector. Involving key government agencies such as NEA, SCDF, EDB and JTC, the Taskforce would be implementing the following changes in support of the safety case regime:

- (i) A set of MHI Regulations targeted for enactment by the first half of 2016;
- (ii) A National MHI Regulatory Office to be established as the single regulatory front for MOM, NEA and SCDF; and
- (iii) The industry will be given a year to prepare and build up capabilities before the new safety case requirements come into effect in 2017.

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*The highlight was the visit to Health and Safety Laboratory testing and experimental facilities. Under controlled laboratory conditions, they witnessed the effects of a live exploding metal drum, a polymerisation process, a chemical runaway reaction and a jet fire impinging on a material that was to be tested for its resistance to thermal radiation. As they said, seeing is believing! The live demonstration really helped to bring to life what can go wrong if a chemical process in an MHI is astray.*

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Mr. Kok Ping Soon, Deputy Secretary (Development), Ministry of Manpower, led officers from the Occupational Safety and Health Specialists Department on a 3-week attachment to the United Kingdom in October 2015



LEFT:

A major hazard installation (MHI) study mission was conducted by an inter-agency team; subsequently, a taskforce was set up to review Singapore's existing MHI framework.



TOP:  
Singapore is  
honoured to be  
hosting the XXI  
World Congress on  
Safety and Health at  
Work in 2017.

## BECOMING A MODEL AND PROMOTER OF WSH ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

Beyond achieving WSH progress on a local level, Singapore is also actively involved in the regional WSH landscape. As an advocate of Vision Zero and high WSH practices and standards, Singapore is humbled to be able to help its regional and international partners in furthering their WSH journey.

In 2017, Singapore will host the XXI World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. This would be the first time that the Congress will be held in Southeast Asia. The monumental event will be jointly organised by the International Labour Organization, International Social Security Association and MOM.

The Congress' theme, "A Global Forum for Prevention", aptly reflects the ongoing journey of championing the philosophy of Vision Zero. Over four consecutive days, the Congress will offer a myriad of programmes and activities aimed at cultivating the practices and culture of WSH. Poster presentations,

industrial visits and the International Media Festival for Prevention line the itinerary of the Congress.

Indeed, it will be a moment of pride for Singapore. This event will mark both a milestone of five decades of WSH efforts, as well as the beginning of many more new chapters to come.

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*It is a special honour and a privilege to be accepted as the host of this world congress. In its long-standing history only countries with a truly successful WSH record and special improvements have been selected as a host. The joint decision of the International Labour Organization and the International Social Security Association to select Singapore for 2017 clearly marks the approval of Singapore's successful work.*

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Dr. Walter Eichendorf, Vice-President, Research Division,  
International Social Security Association

# WSH AWARDS

## Performance 2015



**EMBRACING THE FUTURE  
WITH OPEN HANDS**



**TOP:**  
The annual WSH Awards lauds the commendable efforts of companies and individuals for WSH achievements.

**BOTTOM:**  
Members of the ASEAN Occupational Safety and Health Network at the ASEAN-OSHNET Policy Dialogue 2016.

As with many journeys, there is hardly an end in sight. The future remains both a challenge and an opportunity. OSHD will not rest on its laurels – for the pursuit of WSH excellence is not without challenges and expectations. With the newly-adopted philosophy of Vision Zero, the Division will continue working with stakeholders towards a future where sustainable and long-term practices of WSH are deeply rooted in each and every workplace and worker.

# Taking Singapore's WSH Journey Onto the International Stage

The promising strides Singapore has achieved in WSH would not have been possible without strong international collaborations. The first thread of this mutual linking of hands was woven in 1978 when the Industrial Health Department (IHD) was appointed a World Health Organization (WHO) collaborating centre. More than three decades later, the partnership between WHO and Singapore remains robust.

Following the OSH framework reform in 2005, MOM saw the need to seek inputs from international experts to take Singapore's WSH performance to new heights. With this in mind, the International Advisory Panel (IAP) was convened in 2006. Hailing from countries with some of the best WSH records in the world, the IAP members shed light on global trends and developments in WSH. The Panel has commended Singapore for the progress it has made and been constructive in providing valuable input.

Beyond drawing the best of minds to Singapore, the island city-state also sets its sights on strengthening partnerships beyond its home turf. Over the years OSHD participated in several international and regional conferences, meetings and training courses as well as hosting visits by various international bodies. On the regional front, Singapore is also proud to be an active participant and the current Secretariat of the ASEAN Occupational Safety and Health Network (ASEAN-OSHNET), Asia's regional OSH centre and collaborative platform.

2015 also proved to be a significant year as the United Kingdom (UK) affirmed its relationship with Singapore with a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) marking a mutual commitment to drive world-class innovation, science and specialist expertise around WSH in both countries.

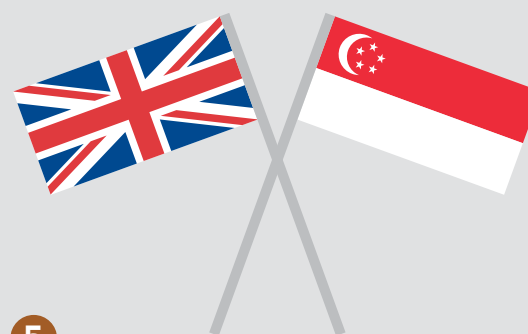
Singapore's heightened participation in these regional and international platforms is reflective of the nation's commitment to work collaboratively with its partners. While learning from the world's best, Singapore will chart the path toward becoming a nation synonymous with safety.

Partnerships have been integral to Singapore's ascending journey as a nation with a forward vision. The same holds true in the field of WSH. International collaborations have enabled us to push the standards of WSH from strength to strength.

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## THE FIRST MILESTONE

Then a young nation, Singapore made its first major stride in weaving an international WSH partnership when the Industrial Health Department (IHD) was appointed the **World Health Organization collaborating centre** in 1978.



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## ONWARD AND UPWARD

In 2015, a formal Memorandum of Understanding marked the partnership between Singapore and the United Kingdom to drive innovation, science and expertise on WSH.

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## TAPPING ON A WORLD OF INSIGHTS

Following the reform of OSH framework in 2005, Singapore also saw the need to learn from countries that are already ahead in their WSH journey. In 2006, the **International Advisory Panel** was set up to advise Singapore on matters involving WSH policies.

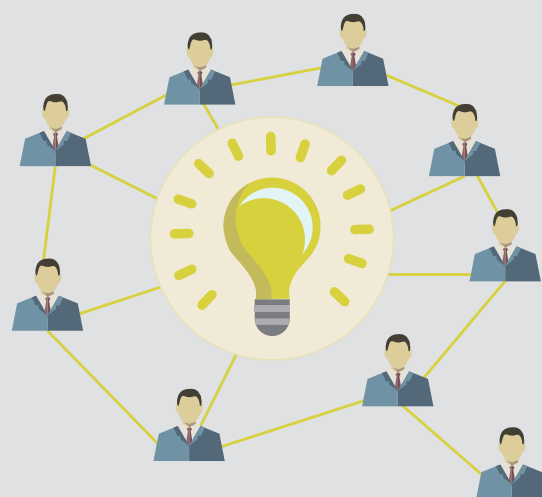


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*This marks the beginning of a long-term partnership in which Singapore and the UK can learn from each other and build world-class knowledge through joint research programmes.*

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Mr. Loh Khum Yean,  
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Manpower on the signing of MOU between UK and Singapore to improve WSH



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## A SHINING BEACON IN ASIA

Singapore is also an active participant and the current Secretariat of the ASEAN Occupational Safety and Health Network (ASEAN-OSHNET), Asia's regional OSH centre and collaborative platform. Formed in 2000 with 10 ASEAN member states, the platform allows Singapore the opportunity to engage with our regional neighbours in Asia for the sharing and learning of WSH insights.

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## STEPPING ONTO THE GLOBAL STAGE

From Seoul to Geneva, Singapore has also participated in a number of regional conferences and international WSH events, including:

- 23rd Asia-Pacific Occupational Safety and Health Organisation (APOSHO) Conference (2007).
- Signing of the Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work – a global pledge and blueprint on preventative safety and health culture (2010).
- The ratification of the ILO Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Convention, C187, at the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Switzerland (2012). Member states that ratify C187 are required to establish a framework within which OSH can be promoted.

**23<sup>RD</sup>** ASIA-PACIFIC OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH ORGANISATION (APOSHO) CONFERENCE (2007)

**SIGNING OF THE SEOUL DECLARATION ON SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK**

**ILO PROMOTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH (OSH) CONVENTION, C187**

