

Investing in workplace safety in times of economic crisis saves lives, money



“OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO ENSURE SAFE AND HEALTHY WORKING ENVIRONMENT TO MAINTAIN PRODUCTIVE AND INNOVATIVE WORKFORCE.”

*Dato' Ir Dr Johari Basri
Director-General*

A GLOBAL economic and financial crisis is definitely a challenging time for employers that are looking to cut costs. This should, however, be done without compromising the safety needs of employees. Investing in safety and health pays and contributes positively not only to a great working environment, but to a business' bottom line.

Incorporating occupational safety and health (OSH) at the workplace saves employers from having to fork out exorbitant amounts of money to compensate workplace injuries and illnesses. Its a fact that in order to remain viable in the longterm, a company must maintain a solid OSH programme and strong OSH performance even through difficult times. It has been noted that successful companies in the long term also have the strongest safety performances.

The Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), under the Human Resources Ministry, gives great emphasis and priority to safety and health at work to prevent industrial accidents and occupational-related diseases.

DOSH Director-General Dato' Dr Johari Basri is a firm believer that despite the economic scenario, companies must comply with all requirements of legislation related to safety and health as stated in the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, as well as regulations and approved codes of practice.

“I strongly feel that safety and health must be an integral part of our daily activities and that proper practice of safe and healthy working procedures would provide a safe and healthy workplace for all workers,” he said.

He affirmed that the employers, employees, self-employed workers, designers, manufacturers, importers as well as plant and supply vendors are all responsible to ensure occupational safety and health at the workplace.



For information pertaining to Occupational Safety and Health, please contact any of our state offices or Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH) Level 2,3 & 4, Block D3, Complex D Federal Government Administration Centre

What's your responsibility?

According to Dr Johari, an employer is obligated to protect the employees in relation to safety, health and welfare through the following procedures:

- to provide and maintain a safe plant and working system;
- to put in place procedures so as to ensure safety and health in the usage, handling, storage and transportation of the plant and substances;
- to provide information, instruction, training and supervision for new and old employees;
- to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and free from health hazards; and,
- to provide the necessary amenities for the welfare of those who are working.

Even in these trying times, employees too, have a responsibility to advise their employers to comply to safety measures and avoid getting themselves or others injured while

carrying out their work activities. Government efforts, integrated with the involvement of the employers, employees and the public must be continuous and comprehensive to increase awareness in creating a safe and healthy workplace. This will ensure the quality of working life and the employers survival.

Enforcement and outreach activities

To ensure all occupational activities are safe, DOSH enforcements are carried out through its headquarters in Putrajaya and 13 state offices in every state capital. There are also two branch offices each in Sabah and Sarawak.

DOSH enforcement activities are carried out to protect workers and others at work from any danger arising from the occupational activities covered by Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994, Factories and Machinery Act 1967 and Petroleum (Safety Measures) Act 1984.

Last year, DOSH with its increased staff in the enforcement division, managed to carry out 147,855 statutory inspections

of factories, unfired pressure vessels, lifts, elevators, cranes and boilers. It also carried out 1,435 industrial hygiene and ergonomic activities and 3,596 in the non-manufacturing sectors including agriculture, veterinary, fishing, transportation, forestry, wholesale and retail, hotel, finance and public services.

So far, DOSH has published 48 guidelines and industrial codes of practice as the reference for industries and the public. Besides enforcement activities, DOSH organised outreach programmes to promote a safety and health culture in industrial and non-industrial areas throughout Malaysia.

Publicity and promotional programmes is carried out through DOSH state offices and major events, such as World Day for OSH and National OSH Excellent Awards, are organised by the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (NCOSH).

A little history

Occupational safety and health was first implemented in Malaysia some 130 years ago and the focus was in statutory inspections of

steam boilers and prime movers in the tin mines. It was only after the Second World War, that the States of the Federation of Malaya enforced a uniform legislation with the passage of the Machinery Ordinance, 1953. With the enforcement of this ordinance, the department became the Machinery Department replacing the Boiler and Machinery Division under the Department of Mines.

The legislation was further amended with the Factories and Machinery Act, 1967 which came into force in 1970 and subsequently the 1953 Ordinance was abrogated. The name of the department was also changed to the Factories and Machinery Department.

It was in 1994, following the approval of the Occupational Safety and Health Act, the department's name was changed to what it is today. As the downturn in the economy forces companies to deal with declining revenue, layoffs and tight-to-non-existent credit problems, workplace safety should not be compromised however dismal the economic outlook is.

Dr Johari's advise is: "Do not compromise where occupational

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safety and health is concerned. Begin by doing what safety does best as it definitely pays in the long run."

He reiterated his stand that industries must maintain their focus on OSH, even during the current world-wide economic crisis, as developing strong safety cultures have the single greatest impact on accident reduction of any process.

A company with a strong safety culture typically experiences few at-risk behaviors, consequently they also experience low accident rates, low turn-over, low absenteeism, and high productivity. They are usually companies who are extremely successful by excelling in all aspects of business.