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Heightened Safety Period Measures to Address Spate of Workplace Fatalities

1 September 2022 | [Workplace safety and health](#)

MOM IMPLEMENTS NEW “HEIGHTENED SAFETY” MEASURES TO ADDRESS SPATE OF WORKPLACE FATALITIES

Starting today, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is introducing a slate of new measures to strengthen workplace safety and health (WSH) and improve WSH oversight. These new measures and a state of “Heightened Safety” is needed in view of the concerning rise in workplace fatalities this year. MOM will work together with and support companies in taking greater ownership of WSH during the next six months of “Heightened Safety”, which may be extended if necessary.

2 As of 1 September 2022, the number of workplace fatalities stands at 36 for 2022. This is very close to the 37 fatalities recorded in the whole of 2021. MOM recognises that some sectors are still recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and many companies are catching up on delays in projects while others are expanding their operations as the economy reopens. Nevertheless, safety must remain a priority for all employers. Most employers support the call for stronger workplace safety and MOM will enable and support employers to instil a strong safety culture and implement good safety practices. For companies that fall short on safety, MOM will increase the accountability of these companies and their senior management. MOM will implement the following measures to complement ongoing efforts (See **Table 1**):

a. Introduce a six-month “Heightened Safety” period from 1 September 2022 to 28 February 2023 during which:

i. If MOM finds serious WSH lapses such as unsafe workplace conditions or poor risk controls following serious or fatal workplace accidents, we may debar companies from employing new foreign employees for up to three months and require Chief Executives to personally account to MOM and take responsibility for rectifications.

ii. Companies are required to conduct a mandatory Safety Time-Out by allocating time to review their safety procedures and complete the Safety Time-Out activities (See **Annex**). The length of the STO should be sufficiently long to review risks corresponding to the scale of operations. Companies must conduct the STO between 1 September 2022 and 15 September 2022. Companies will be debarred from employing new foreign employees for one month if found to be non-compliant with the Safety Time-Out.

b. Strengthen support for SMEs who need help to improve their WSH practices and processes, through the expansion of StartSAFE: Under the existing StartSAFE programme, small and medium enterprises have access to WSH consultants who can help companies identify WSH risks and implement good WSH practices. The costs of the WSH consultants are fully borne by MOM. More companies are encouraged to apply for StartSAFE as a follow-up to the Safety Time-Out safety reviews.

c. Introduce targeted measures for the construction sector from 1 October 2022:

- i. A new harmonised set of disqualification criteria across all public sector construction tenders to align the evaluation criteria and temporarily disqualify contractors with poor WSH performance from participating in these tenders ;
- ii. A Revised Demerit Point System , where the threshold for issuing demerit points will be lowered. This means that more demerit points will be issued for WSHA breaches and errant companies with consistently poor WSH performance will reach the penalty thresholds more quickly, after which they will be debarred from hiring foreign employees for up to 2 years.
- d. Set up a Multi-Sectoral Workplace Safety Taskforce, advised by an external experts panel: Comprising representatives from key government agencies, this new taskforce will conduct sectoral deep dives into work practices and industry structures to strengthen safety practices and outcomes. The taskforce will be able to tap on ideas and advice from an external experts panel, comprising industry representatives and WSH consultants. Senior Minister of State for Manpower, Zaqy Mohamad, will chair the Taskforce, more details of which will be revealed in due course. Agencies involved will include the Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Trade and Industry.
- 3 MOM urges all employers and supervisors to place the utmost priority on the safety of their workers. All workers must also follow safety procedures, watch out for unsafe workplace practices, and bring them to the attention of supervisors and MOM. MOM understands that as the economy recovers, there will be pressure to meet project timelines, but safety cannot take a backseat. We will support companies who seek to strengthen workplace safety, and will not hesitate to take action against companies with serious safety lapses and those found to be at fault for major workplace injuries and deaths.

Table 1: Ongoing Measures for Workplace Safety & Health

Ongoing Measures	Details
Ramped up inspections and stiffer penalties	With effect from 14 Jun 2022, (i) composition fines for infringements found were doubled from \$1,000 to \$2,000 on average, up to a maximum of \$5,000; (ii) companies issued with Stop Work Order (SWO) must engage an external auditor to conduct a thorough review of their WSH management systems before the SWO is lifted; and (iii) companies that have had major injuries are required to engage external auditors to conduct a thorough review of their system of WSH controls, and implement measures to prevent recurrence.
Increasing awareness of whistleblowing channels	Project signboards at construction sites will show a QR code with a link to MOM's feedback webpage, together with MOM's safety hotline. WSH safety hotline and e-feedback shared with migrant workers. Workers and members of the public are encouraged to report unsafe practices on MOM's website. Identities will remain anonymous.
Requiring pre-start assessments	Implement weekly coordination meetings and daily toolbox briefings for companies in the Construction, Manufacturing, Marine, Process and Transport & Storage industries.
Tapping on technology to improve vehicular safety	For an overview of vehicular safety technology and government grant support for SMEs, please visit https://www.mom.gov.sg/workplace-safety-and-health/wsh-technology .

[STO Checklist 1 Sep 22](#) 

[STO circular 1 Sep 22](#) 

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SAFETY TIME-OUT CHECKLIST (Sep 2022)

- A. A Safety Time-out (STO) is a Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) response measure that involves the temporary suspension of all or part of a company's operations to review risk assessments, improve site safety, and communicate the importance of WSH to all workers.
- B. This STO checklist serves to guide your company on steps you should take to review and improve your WSH systems and work processes. You are encouraged to take additional measures beyond those listed.
- C. This checklist can be applied to any industry, but also features items that focus on vehicular-related risks. This is because close to half of the fatal accidents in the past three months were vehicular-related. Do ensure that the recent accidents are not repeated at your company.

1	To-Do Items for Top Management ¹	Completion Status	Follow-up Action
1.1	Personally do workplace walk-about to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage workers to report safety risks and near misses to supervisors • ask workers to surface their safety concerns • reassure workers that there are no penalties for reporting • put responsibility on supervisors or project managers to resolve safety risks 		
1.2	Share learning points from recent fatal accidents from WSHC's WSH Alerts with all workers. Find WSH Alerts here .		
1.3	[For occupiers] Instruct all contractors and sub-contractors at your worksite also perform the STO with their workers		

2	To-Do Items for Supervisors or WSH Personnel	Completion Status	Follow-up Action
2.1	Update Risk Assessment with new risks and control measures, especially for vehicular-related risks and those from past accidents as outlined in the WSH Alerts.		
2.2	Conduct workshops or meetings with workers to recap site safety and how they can uphold good WSH standards.		
2.3	Ensure that all workers are briefed on key risks and follow safe work procedure, especially for any new risks identified in the Risk Assessment.		
2.4	Confirm that personnel are adequately trained before being assigned work.		
2.5	Check that machinery/equipment/vehicles are used properly in the way they have been designed (e.g. no overloading, no ferrying of		

¹ "Top management" refers to the chief executive, managing director, or other similar officer in the company purporting to act in any such capacity.

	workers or hanging loads on forklift forks, no use of vehicles as step platforms or ladders).		
2.6	Check that there are clearly marked demarcation between workers and vehicular movement, and that all workers comply with the demarcation.		
2.7	Consider the need to install: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more convex mirrors or deploy additional signalmen/banksmen to eliminate vehicle blind spots; • more road humps to reduce vehicle speed; • more barriers to keep workers and vehicles apart. 		
2.8	Check that all vehicle drivers/operators follow safe procedure for parking vehicles (e.g. engage parking brakes, install wheel chocks especially when on slopes).		
2.9	Check that loading and unloading activities are carried out on flat and stable ground, and that workers are not exposed to being struck by toppling loads.		
2.10	Check that workers know how to secure loads without over-loading vehicles.		
2.11	[After the STO] Compile and communicate the recommendations and action plans arising from the STO to top management and all workers.		
2.12	[After the STO] Monitor the progress and effectiveness of STO follow-up action.		

1 Sep 2022

MOM Safety Time Out Requirement

There have been 36 fatal workplace accidents in 2022 so far, close to the 37 recorded for the whole of 2021. This is tragic and alarming. Almost all the fatal cases could have been prevented if workers were more aware of risky situations, and companies ensured that workers followed safe working procedures.

2. Close to half of the fatal accidents in the past three months were vehicular-related. Workers were killed due to reasons like being in vehicles' blind spots, crushed between the moving parts of vehicles, run over by vehicles whose handbrakes were not engaged, or whose engines were left running when there was no driver/operator.

3. To stop this worrying trend, MOM is requiring the following companies to conduct a mandatory Safety Time Out (STO) anytime during the 1 to 15 Sep 2022 period:

- All companies in the construction, manufacturing, marine, process or transport and storage industries; and
- All companies in other industries, which use heavy or industrial vehicles (e.g. buses, lorries, prime movers, forklifts, cranes, wheel-loader).

4. Conducting the STO means suspending operations temporarily to review safety procedures and complete the STO activities in the STO Checklist (link in para 6 below). The length of the STO should be sufficiently long to review risks corresponding to the scale of the operations. Companies should conduct the STO between 1 Sep 2022 and 15 Sep 2022 . For companies that need to operate 24/7, you can choose to do the STO for different teams of workers separately, such that critical work can still proceed at all times, rather than for all workers to pause work. This STO should cover all workplace risks but pay special attention to reinforcing vehicular safety due to the frequency of such incidents.

5. STO activities can take various forms, including (but not limited to) the following:

For top management¹:

- Personally do a walk-about on site to encourage workers to report safety risks and near misses to their supervisors. Ask workers to surface their safety concerns, if any, and reassure them that they will not be penalised for doing so. Emphasise top management's commitment to safety and inform site/project managers and supervisors that any safety risks should be resolved before work commencement.
- Share learning points from recent fatal accidents from the [WSH Alerts](#) with all workers, to avoid a repeat of such cases in your own company.

For WSH personnel:

¹ "Top management" refers to the chief executive, managing director, or other similar officer in the company purporting to act in any such capacity.

- Identify any new risks that were not factored into the Risk Assessment, and devise control measures to mitigate these risks. Pay special attention to mitigate the risks of recent vehicular-related fatal accidents.
- Ensure that the control measures in the company's Risk Assessment are being implemented.
- Hold workshops or meetings with workers to recap basic site safety, and how they can uphold good WSH standards.

6. To guide your company in implementing the STO, you can refer to the WSH Council's resources, including a [Safety Time Out checklist](#), WSH Alerts on recent fatal cases, and other relevant information, which can be found on the WSH Council's website [here](#).

7. As this is a period of heightened safety, MOM requires your company to complete the activities in the [Safety Time Out checklist](#) anytime during the 1 to 15 Sep 2022 timeframe. You are encouraged to take more measures as well, beyond what was stated. We advise you to retain evidence of your STO activities. If MOM finds that the STO activities were not done by 15 Sep 2022, your company will face debarment from hiring new work pass holders for 1 month.

8. Prevent more accidents by setting aside the time and management attention to conduct an effective STO.

Heightened Safety Measures

New Measures to Improve Workplace Safety and Health

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will partner and help industries and companies to be safer and strengthen our safety culture. MOM is implementing Heightened Safety measures from 1 Sep 2022 to complement ongoing efforts. Here are the new measures introduced:

1

Six-month "Heightened Safety" period from 1 Sep - 28 Feb 2023

- Debar companies from employing new foreign employees for up to three months, and require Chief Executives to personally account to MOM and take responsibility for rectifications if serious workplace safety and health (WSH) lapses are found following serious or fatal workplace accidents
- Mandatory Safety Time-Out for companies¹ in high risk industries or performing high risk activities involving use of heavy or industrial vehicles to allocate time between 1 Sep - 15 Sep to review their safety procedures



2

Expand scale of StartSAFE to support companies in improving WSH practices and processes

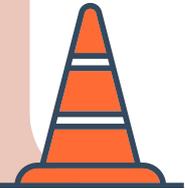
- Facilitate access to WSH consultants who can help identify WSH risks and implement good WSH practices



3

Disqualification Framework and Revised Demerit Points System for Construction Sector (from 1 Oct 2022)

- New harmonised disqualification criteria across public sector construction tenders. Contractors with poor WSH performance will be temporarily disqualified from these tenders
- Lowering threshold for issuing demerit points, resulting in companies with consistently poor WSH performance being debarred from employing new foreign employees for up to two years



4

New Multi-Sectoral Workplace Safety Taskforce

- Set up new taskforce with representatives from key government agencies²
- Examine and strengthen sectoral safety practices and outcomes
- Advised by external experts panel comprising industry experts and WSH consultants



¹Construction, Manufacturing, Marine, Process and Transport & Storage

²Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Trade and Industry