

World Day for Safety and Health at Work: Singapore reaffirms its commitment to safety and health

Singapore is proud to celebrate the World Day for Safety and Health at Work with the International Labour Organization (ILO). It reflects our determination to safeguard our workers' well-being and enhance their productive capacity. The ILO estimates that occupational accidents and diseases cost 4% of the world's GDP and takes 6,400 lives daily. We must do our utmost to understand and prevent work-related accidents and occupational diseases.

This is a collective effort. Governments must enact the right regulations, and enforce standards of workplace safety and health (WSH) that meet their people's expectations. Employers must provide safe and healthy work environments, and foster a safety culture among their staff. Employees must look out for themselves and one another, and take the initiative to improve WSH standards. These are cultural issues that take time to change. But through our individual and collective efforts, we can raise WSH practices and, thus, our workers' welfare.

Singapore treats WSH very seriously. We have signed the Seoul Declaration on Safety and Health at Work in 2010 and ratified the ILO Convention 187 in 2012. We put in place a national WSH Strategy to raise safety and health standards in our workplaces, in collaboration with our tripartite partners. A WSH Council, comprising industry leaders, works to raise WSH standards throughout the economy. Over the past decade, we have reduced the rate of fatal workplace injuries by more than half.

There is much that countries can learn from one another. Singapore is sharing experiences with our neighbours in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as part of ASEAN's "Plan of Action" to strengthen our national WSH frameworks. We ourselves are adopting best practices from OECD countries which began their WSH journeys much earlier. For example, Singapore established a risk observatory last year. Modelled after the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) risk observatory, it will identify emerging safety and health concerns in Southeast Asia and develop preventive measures.

The World Day is an appropriate occasion to reflect on the importance of workplace safety and health. Let us all reaffirm our commitment to this cause, and join hands to raise WSH standards.

Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister
Singapore

