

Workplace safety is everyone's responsibility

FROM **HO SIONG HIN**

Commissioner, Workplace Safety and Health,
Ministry of Manpower

AND **LAI POON LIAU**

Executive Director,
Workplace Safety and Health Council

We share Mr Kwan Jin Yao's concerns about the accidents caused by falls from heights, slips and trips ("More should be done to prevent workplace deaths"; Dec 7).

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the industry-led Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council take a four-pronged approach to ensure safe workplaces: Enforcement, capability building, setting standards and engagement.

The MOM conducts more than 6,000 annual worksite inspections with companies selected in a risk-based approach. Every accident is investigated and the MOM will not hesitate to act against errant companies.

To increase deterrence, the MOM reviewed and enhanced the Demerit Points System and Business Under Surveillance programme in July, and will review our programmes continually to ensure effectiveness.

The WSH Council visits companies involved in fatal accidents to understand their WSH challenges and provide assistance to improve their safety performance.

Lessons learnt from past accidents and good practices are then shared

with the industry through forums organised by the Council.

Wide-ranging guidance materials such as industry-specific guidelines, code of practices, activity checklists and videos have been developed with the industry to educate workplaces on good practices and help them manage industry-specific WSH challenges. These resources are available free at www.wshc.sg.

To strengthen industry capability and extend our outreach, the MOM and the Council organise clinics to help workers understand and manage WSH risks in their workplace.

Nevertheless, we agree that more can be done and we will continue to explore new avenues to strengthen

our companies' WSH capabilities.

It is, however, important to reiterate that safety is ultimately everyone's responsibility. All stakeholders — employers, supervisors and workers — must take proactive ownership of WSH to effectively improve the safety of their workplace and colleagues.

The MOM and the Council will continue to work closely with the industry to raise WSH standards and foster safe work habits.

We urge the community to also take an active role in reporting unsafe work conditions to the MOM at 6317 1111, or download the SNAP@MOM mobile app to photograph unsafe work practices and notify people at workplaces to take action.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

● Report unsafe work conditions to the MOM at 6317 1111, or download the SNAP@MOM mobile app to photograph unsafe work practices and notify people at workplaces to take action.

Every person with a disability can be supported to rise above any challenge

FROM **SERENE HO LAY PING**

As a woman born with brittle bones, I cringe at the singling out of disabled unborn children to justify abortion ("Value dignity of unborn with disabilities"; Dec 14).

In the Guidelines on Termination of Pregnancy, the "contents of pre-abortion counselling may be adapted for women diagnosed with foetal abnormalities". Real discrimination happens to unborn children; not eve-

ry baby is accorded the same value before birth.

No woman feels empowered when considering abortion, more so for a woman whose unborn child is diagnosed with a disability or health condition. What she and her family need is not a quick fix to get rid of a perceived burden to the family and society, but rather to be linked to the available resources and be supported in the child's milestone development.

The human spirit should not be un-

“All I had was an extraordinary mother who believed in maximising her child's potential.

derestimated. Every person can be supported to rise above any challenge.

The Prime Minister recently said that the character of individual citizens, rather than blueprints and programmes, decide whether a society is good or bad, a success or a failure ("Push for more inclusive S'pore must continue: PM"; Dec 3).

He added, in his speech at the official launch of the Enabling Village — Singapore's first community space for people with disabilities — that an inclusive society can be built by valuing everyone and through active citizenship.

Before any person with a disability can be valued, he must be given an equal opportunity to live.

In the 1970s, when ultrasound scans and pre-abortion counselling were unheard of, I was given a chance at life. My mother, the primary carer,

had no support group or professional advice on how to care for a special-needs child.

But she had the tenacity and responsibility that come with motherhood. At birth, my bones were breakable at every wrong touch. My childhood was spent in hospitals healing from fractures. Outsiders deemed me a child with no future.

All I had was an extraordinary mother who believed in maximising her child's potential. I was given education and am now an educator with the ability to impact lives.

As one who was seen as hopeless at birth, not even my parents could have predicted a fruitful life for me. All I needed was that chance.

Even as I celebrate my birthday each year, 8,515 babies last year never got to celebrate theirs here. Every child deserves a birthday.

Below 5°C rule for raw fish storage may be inadequate

FROM **TIN LEUNG**

I refer to the letter "Raw-fish ban: Probes take time, have to be thorough" (Dec 12).

The stringent requirements for all food establishments that wish to sell raw fish dishes include using only salt-water fish, keeping fish chilled at below 5°C and sourcing from suppliers with proper cold chain management.

Further studies of the risks of consuming raw seafood in general should be conducted, however.

If necessary, other raw seafood dishes such as raw cockles and undercooked prawns should not be served without adequate cold chain management from the suppliers to food establishments.

Raw seafood besides fish can also

contain harmful bacteria and parasites such as the anisakis worm. The requirement of the National Environment Agency that food establishments store fish for raw consumption at below 5°C may be inadequate.

Non-bacterial parasites such as anisakis reside typically in fish such as salmon, used in sushi and sashimi.

According to the United Kingdom's Food Standards Agency, the fish should be frozen to -20°C for at least 24 hours, to ensure that any non-visible parasites or undetectable nematode larvae are destroyed.

The NEA should consider recommending deep-freezing of raw salt-water fish such as salmon and other raw or undercooked seafood, on top of the existing requirements for all food establishments.

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