

**SPEECH BY SMS ZAQY MOHAMAD, SCIC'S
ANNUAL DINNER 2023
21 APRIL 2023, 7.30PM
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL**

1. A good evening to everyone. I am glad to be back attending the Singapore Chemical Industry Council's (SCIC) Annual Dinner.

- The SCIC has been a strong partner in driving workplace safety and health (WSH) efforts, and I am honoured to present the Responsible Care Leadership Award today to companies who have led the way and demonstrated sustained WSH efforts.

Heightened Safety Period

2. Last year was particularly challenging for workplace safety and health.

- We had to introduce the Heightened Safety Period (HSP) in September 2022 to address the spate of workplace fatalities.

3. We ended 2022 with a total of 46 workplace fatalities and a fatality rate of 1.3 per 100,000 workers, which was higher than pre-Covid fatality rate of 1.1 in 2019.

a. The number of workplace fatalities would have been higher without the HSP measures.

i. The average number of fatalities per month fell from 4.5 in January to August 2022, before HSP, to 2.5 in September to December 2022 during HSP.

b. An average of 2.5 fatalities per month brought the annualised fatality rate for the HSP period to 0.8 per 100,000 workers, which is below our WSH2028 target of 1.0, and much lower compared to 1.5 before HSP.

ii. This suggests that we can keep the fatality numbers low if we put our hearts and minds to it.

4. For the chemical industry, the average number of fatalities per month worsened during HSP, from 0 before HSP to 0.5 during HSP.

- For this year, thankfully, there has been no fatality to date. I encourage everyone to sustain their efforts and not let down our guard.

Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) on Chief Executives and Board of Directors' WSH Duties

5. Another key initiative introduced last year was the Approved Code of Practice, or ACOP, for Company Directors' WSH Duties, which provides practical guidance on how they may fulfil their legal WSH obligations.

- The role of corporate senior leadership cannot be emphasised enough – your influence and control over workplace resources and priorities is critical in ensuring workers' health and safety, and in ensuring workers themselves take ownership of WSH.

6. I urge all companies to implement the measures in the ACOP to enhance your organisation's WSH performance and management.

- For instance, setting WSH as a regular agenda item in Board meetings, demanding effective WSH standards from suppliers, and setting up an internal WSH reporting system so that workers have the confidence to report near misses or unsafe workplace practices to their supervisors.

7. Every company that wants to improve their workplace health and safety will be supported in doing so.

- For SMEs that are just starting in their WSH journey, we have expanded our StartSAFE programme, where SMEs have free access to WSH consultants who can help them to identify WSH risks and implement good WSH practices.

SCIC's ongoing efforts

8. Zooming into the chemical industry, SCIC has always been committed to high standards for safety and health, and is a strong supporter of WSH initiatives.

9. One example of a WSH initiative is the Jurong Island Vision Zero Cluster, or JIVZ.

- The JIVZ aims to collectively raise WSH standards on Jurong Island.
- It calls on employers, workers, unions and the Government to embrace and commit to the mindset that every injury and ill-health at work is preventable, and that zero harm is possible.

- As a member of JIVZ, you can join cluster-exclusive WSH learning journeys, learn from sharing sessions on WSH best practices and receive WSH-related news and developments.
- More than 90 companies have joined JIVZ, and I encourage those who have yet to join to do so.

10. I would like to take this opportunity to thank SCIC for their efforts in promoting JIVZ and strengthening WSH:

- a. SCIC worked with the Association of Process Industry (ASPRI), the United Workers of Petroleum Industry (UWPI) and the WSH Council (WSHC) to invite and encourage the Jurong Island fraternity to join the JIVZ Cluster and this Vision Zero movement.
- b. SCIC, ASPRI and WSHC also collaborate to organise quarterly JIVZ forums for the Jurong Island fraternity.
 - i. These forums facilitate open sharing of good WSH practices that aims to drive greater WSH ownership and culture among the Jurong Island community.
 - ii. The topics covered have ranged from confined space safety, to working at heights and pressure vessel safety.

11. Another example is ChemPact, which is a platform for leaders to proactively make WSH pledges to improve the safety and health of their employees.

- SCIC and ASPRI, together with WSHC, jointly organised the inaugural WSH Leadership Convention: ChemPact 2022.
- I look forward to the next ChemPact in 2024.

Recognise SCIC's efforts to build on their strong WSH foundation to do more

12. Beyond JIVZ and ChemPact, SCIC has embarked on various efforts to strengthening WSH, building on their strong WSH foundation. Allow me to cite three examples.

- a. First, SCIC is extending their Responsible Care guidelines beyond plant owners to include Process Construction Maintenance (PCM) partners, to uplift the sector's WSH culture and performance.
 - i. I thank SCIC for working with ASPRI to bring PCM partners into the Responsible Care programme by curating a set of guidelines that are relevant and fit-for-purpose.
- b. Second, SCIC is enhancing the current Responsible Care Employee Health and Safety code by integrating additional management practices with a focus on "health".
 - ii. This will ensure that signatory companies of Responsible Care include not just physical safety but mental well-being practices in their annual self- evaluation.
- c. Third, SCIC and ASPRI are active members of the Joint Stakeholders Committee on Safe Transportation of Migrant Workers, which, as the name suggests, aims to ensure the safety of migrant workers during transportation.
 - iii. I applaud the Committee's goal of transiting to ferrying workers in buses.
 - iv. I understand that the Committee is currently working on
 - (i) garnering buy-in from more stakeholders to transit from the use of lorries to buses, and
 - (ii) examining how to achieve economies of scale to manage cost.
 - (iii) I look forward to hearing about the Committee's progress.

Feature

13. It is heartening to know that individual companies in the chemical industry are also doing their part to strengthen WSH.

14. I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to all five Responsible Care Leadership Award recipients.

- One of them is Sumitomo Chemical Asia. Sumitomo Chemical Asia is a strong supporter of WSH initiatives and a member of the JIVZ cluster.
- At ChemPact 2022, they made a pledge to solicit feedback from employees and contractors to build a sustainable safety culture.
- They have also taken the lead in driving Responsible Care, through conducting one-on-one clinics to help SCIC members adopt best practices and leading the review of the Responsible Care Process Safety Code.
- I hope more SCIC members will emulate Sumitomo Chemical Asia and the other Responsible Care Leadership Award recipients, to learn from their best practices and collectively raise WSH standards in the chemical industry.

Conclusion

15. Before I close, I would like to emphasise that WSH works for the benefit of both workers and businesses.

- It directly benefits workers by taking care of their health and well-being.
- And it is also aligned to commercial interests. Businesses with high WSH standards will be more sustainable and will be able to better attract, retain and motivate talent, as well as avoid business disruptions.

16. WSH is everyone's responsibility, both management and workers alike. Let us press on in our efforts to strengthen WSH.

17. Thank you.