

NIOSH to work with govt in reducing road accidents

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KUCHING: The National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) will soon work with other relevant government departments and agencies to find ways the country could reduce the alarming number of commuting accidents.

NIOSH chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye said the number of commuting accidents over the years was gradually increasing and something has to be done about it.

“Last year alone the total number of commuting accidents reported to the Social Security Organisation (Socso) was 22,040 which constituted almost 39 per cent of the total number of industrial accidents reported to Socso,” he said.

He explained that commuting accidents were those involving employees on their way to and back from their workplace, when they were out for lunch break or travelling from one point to the other as required by their scope of duty.

“It comes under traffic case but because it involves employees we also regard it as one of the occupational safety and health problems. Therefore being a body that has been tasked to promote occupational safety and health awareness in the country we feel that something has to be done about this.

“Probably in a few months’ time we will sit down together with other relevant authorities to work out how we can minimise the number of commuting accidents.”

He was speaking to reporters at a news conference after opening the two-day Borneo Conference of Occupational Safety and Health (BOSH) at Pullman Hotel here yesterday.

Earlier, Lee said that in the global economy, occupational safety and health issues were among the key determinants to a company's competitiveness through productivity enhancement and efficiency.

"Observations and evidence had shown that an increase in productivity and improvement in workplace environment are the results of good safety and health work practices and the adoption of a work safety culture.

"OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) must therefore be treated as an investment and not an expense and this is in line with the maxim that safety is a good business," he noted.

As such, he said, all the top management level of any company should not just make occupational safety and health their topmost priority but instead make it their culture.

He said poor OSH performance has a negative impact particularly for small and medium enterprises.

"The human and business costs of workplace accidents and fatalities and ill health are immense. It will not only disrupt the day-to-day operation of the enterprises concerned but may also lead to the loss of lives and other financial losses," he added.

He pointed out that everyone must commit themselves to foster and promote a common preventive safety and health culture that would become a fundamental basis for improving OSH performance in this era of rapid development and globalisation.

"Nurturing and maintaining a preventive safety and health culture requires making use of all available means to increase general awareness, knowledge and understanding of the concepts of hazards and risks and how they may be prevented or controlled.

"However, while the government can put the necessary legislative framework in place, employers and employees themselves must play their part to ensure that their organisations accord the highest priority and commitment to building a safety culture at all levels."

He said that only by working together would they achieve the high safety and health standards aspired.

Lee stated that although the number of accidents at workplaces had shown a significant reduction since the introduction of OSHA in 1994 that did not mean that there was room for complacency.

"According to the statistics compiled by the Ministry of Human Resources, the number of industrial accidents reported to Socso and the Labour Department for all sectors decreased from 75,386 in 2000 to 35,616 in 2010. This is a substantial reduction of over 52.7 per cent over a period of 10 years."

“However, although there is a decline in the average number of industrial accidents from eight per 1,000 workers in 2000 to 4.8 in 2010, we should strive against the benchmark of developed countries which only have one to two accidents per 1,000 workers,” he commented.

BOSH is a biannual event created to promote OSH awareness particularly in the Borneo region and the country as a whole with the first conference being organised in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah in 2009.

Among those present at the occasion yesterday were NIOSH executive director Rosli Hussin, State Occupational Safety and Health Department (DOSHS) director Dasuki Mohd Heak, State Labour Department director August Buma and Sarawak Socso director John Riba Marin.

Read more: <http://www.theborneopost.com/2011/12/06/niosh-to-work-with-govt-in-reducing-road-accidents/#ixzz1gyKTjHJX>