

Singapore WSH Conference Fact Sheet

Background

1. In recent years, Asia has made significant economic progress. Companies are beginning to focus on improving their workplace practices to retain talent and raise productivity. This has led to a growing need for stronger Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) practices, and good progress in raising WSH standards in Asia has been made. Notwithstanding, WSH standards in Asia still lag behind many of the developed Western economies.¹ There is a strong need to accelerate the progress of improving WSH performances in the region. To facilitate this process, we need a platform for WSH leaders to share ideas and move the WSH agenda forward. A premier WSH conference will be apt to serve such a purpose.

A Premier WSH Conference in Singapore

2. Singapore, as one of the leading countries in Asia in terms of WSH standards and performances,² is taking the lead and is organising a premier WSH conference. This conference will be held regularly in Singapore. Singapore's journey in achieving our current levels of WSH standards can inspire better WSH performances regionally. And as an established Meeting, Incentive, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) destination, Singapore is well-placed to serve as the gateway to Asia for global WSH thoughts, innovation, technologies and good practices.

Key Partners

3. The conference will be organised by the WSH Council and the Ministry of Manpower. The strategic partners for the conference are the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and our tripartite partners, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF). Other supporting partners include WSH professional associations and socio-economic development institutions.

Concept and Programme

4. The inaugural Singapore WSH Conference will be held from **15 to 16 September 2010** with the theme "**Embracing Challenges, Pushing WSH Frontiers**". The conference will have a strong Asian focus and theme reflects the importance for Asia to take note of the WSH challenges and be forward looking to break new ground in raising WSH standards. The conference will also recognise that WSH efforts are critical in advancing business and economic development.

5. The Singapore WSH Conference will target three groups of audiences from Asia; namely (i) senior government officials, (ii) business leaders, and (iii) WSH professionals.

¹ Source: "Global trend according to estimated number of occupational accidents and fatal work-related diseases at region and country level" by Hamalainen et al.

² According to the research "Global trend according to estimated number of occupational accidents and fatal work-related diseases at region and country level" by Hamalainen et al., Singapore's 2003 occupational fatality rate ranked second among the Asian countries, just after Japan.

We aim to attract 600 – 700 participants for the inaugural conference, comprising 30% senior government officials and business leaders, and 70% WSH professionals.

6. Senior Minister, Mr Goh Chok Tong, will be invited as the Guest-of-Honour for the conference. Eminent international speakers and prominent business leaders will also be invited to share insights on WSH challenges unique to Asia and WSH ideas and solutions that are contextualised to the region.

7. The conference will have both plenary sessions and breakout symposiums. Plenary sessions will house all participants and feature prominent WSH thought leaders sharing their latest thinking and insights. The breakout symposiums provide a variety of topics to encourage further exchange of ideas. The following WSH topics which have strong relevance to Asia will be discussed at the conference:

a. Challenges in the Development and Implementation of National WSH Strategies

Many countries in Asia grapple with the challenge of high workplace injury and fatality rates. The development and implementation of a national WSH strategy will help guide these countries to elevate their WSH performances.

b. Fostering Industry-led WSH Approaches and Partnerships

As a paternalistic culture is predominant in Asian countries, industry-led WSH efforts are often not pervasive. The conference will be a good platform for the countries to showcase and share their work in the area of WSH collaborations and initiatives with industry associations and tripartite partners.

c. Inculcating WSH in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

SMEs make up majority of the business landscape in Asia but generally lack awareness or are poorly equipped to manage WSH. Countries can share their WSH initiatives tailored for the SMEs. Business leaders from big corporations can share their experiences in influencing the WSH outcomes and raising the WSH capabilities of the SMEs.

d. Enhancing Capability Building for WSH Professionals

Many Asian countries do not have a comprehensive competency framework or training requirements for their WSH professionals. As WSH professionals play a key role in the WSH ecosystem, they must be equipped with the necessary WSH competencies.

e. Managing Workplace Health (WH) Challenges

WH management poses several emerging issues and challenges but there has been little emphasis on WH issues in many Asian countries. The conference will be a good opportunity to raise awareness on the importance and challenges of workplace health management.

f. Innovative WSH Practices

The effective implementation of good WSH practices is another key challenge in Asia. The conference will be a good platform for companies to share their experiences in implementing innovative and good WSH practices and the benefits it brings.

8. The Singapore WSH Conference will also coincide with the biennial Occupational Safety and Health Exhibition for Asia (OS+H Asia) 2010³ and this will complement the experiences of the conference participants.

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³ The Occupational Safety + Health Exhibition (OS+H Asia) is a regional exhibition focused on WSH products and services, organised biennially by Messe-Dusseldorf Asia.