

A Partnership Approach to Improve Work Safety in Confined Space – Hong Kong Experience

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In late 2021, two serious accidents involving work at confined spaces happened in Hong Kong, resulting in three deaths and six injuries. To tackle this proactively, OSHC partnered with stakeholders of confined space work and hosted an array of activities to enhance awareness of related hazards and re-build industry capacity for safe operations in confined space. **Method:** Highlights of the activities are the launch of two long-term schemes: a sponsorship scheme for SMEs and an accreditation scheme to help enterprises (usually SMEs) to set up safety management system (SMS). Promotion materials were also developed to remind confined space workers and their co-workers on dos and don'ts during incidents to reduce casualties. Sponsorship scheme for SMEs provides (1) free safety training and refresher courses for confined space workers and supervisors; (2) financial support to buy gas detectors and dead-man alarm (motion detector); and (3) free consultancy services on use of safety equipment and how to conduct proper risk assessment. Accreditation Scheme further provides enterprises with (1) free consultancy support for developing and implementing SMS; (2) rescue equipment such as safety harnesses, tripods, winches and breathing apparatus; and (3) free accreditation service to validate the SMS so set up. **Conclusion:** Potential clients / principals were engaged and persuaded to accord priority in hiring accredited enterprises to undertake future confined space work who are better equipped to provide relevant service in safe manner. This in turn translates to more business for the accredited enterprises, providing incentive for the trade to join the scheme.

Keywords: Confined space work, safety management system, consultancy support, gas detectors and dead-man alarm (motion detector), rescue equipment
