Workplace safety: Health a factor too

Meeting new targets involves taking a total zero-harm approach that includes not just reducing injury, but also addressing the various impacts of illness.

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For The Straits Times

Less than one workplace fatality per 1,000,000 employees worldwide at any one time—this was the target Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong set Singapore in a recent address at the 15th World Congress on Safety and Health at Work. Suggestions have been made to go beyond this to achieve near-zero accidents, injuries and illness, with workplace interventions aimed at the total workplace safety and Health (TWSH) approach.

Conceived by the National University of Singapore Sascht School of Public Health in collaboration with the Singapore National Ground Safety and Labour Council in 2010, the TWSH approach is a framework developed by the National Institute of Standards and Technology. It is based on the premise of workplaces as systems, and clusters of interrelated dimensions that contribute to health and safety. These clusters include: work environment; organization; safety culture; worker; and products, processes, and services.

External to this framework is the TWSH approach’s broader goal of achieving a culture of health, safety and well-being in the workplace, with the vision of a workplace where all employees feel healthy, safe and fulfilled.

Research has proven that workers with certain chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension are not only less productive, but are also at higher risk of safety lapses. An unhealthy worker who experiences frequent giddiness spells is more prone to falls, which result in injuries or even death.