

# Safety First, We Care



By Ir. Dr. Cheong Thiam Fook

*Ir. Dr. Cheong Thiam Fook is the Chairman of Sub Committee on Membership Drive and Promotion and a member of the Mechanical Engineering Technical Division.*

Isn't it scary to hear about the many accidents at construction sites? This is mainly due to the large number of construction projects going on at the same time, be they high-rise projects or infrastructure projects and whether in urban or rural areas. Accidents that are reported in the media are usually serious and often with fatalities. What about those we aren't aware of as they go unreported? Add to that instances of near accidents? However, we believe that authorities like CIDB and JKKP have all the statistics.

We have all read reports from the clients and developers, main contractors, engineering societies, with oft-said and similar statements such as "we are investigating the accidents" and "we will tighten the Safety Management Plan" etc.

Some parties may even start to hold others responsible and terminate subcontractors etc. But will such actions, always taken after the accidents have happened, help to solve the recurrence of the accidents?.

The answer is "No" because we can see that accidents continue to happen. After so many wake-up calls, it is time that we take serious action to improve safety at construction sites. Safety is a collective responsibility of all parties, especially when it comes to infrastructure projects like the MRT and LRT.

Here are some suggestions to Safety First:

## 1. TRAINING

Employ only trained and qualified construction professionals for high risks works such as crane lifting. CIDB conducts such training of various categories of construction professionals and skilled workers and crane lifting is no exception.

## 2. PLANNING AND EXECUTION

Issue clear directives to cordon off lifting sites to prevent the public from entering or passing by. I once visited a construction site in Japan and I noticed that, during the lifting operation, they really cleared the site to ensure there was no trespassing.

## 3. CHECKING AND REPORTING

Allow a proper reporting system for the public to report malpractices by contractors, with evidence such as photographs sent to CIDB or DOSH for routine investigation by the respective departments. The clients and developers should be kept informed of the incidences.

## 4. ENFORCEMENT

Clients and contractors who fail to observe the safety procedures in execution of the works, should be heavily punished. It is important that all parties ensure Safety First at all construction sites and proper punishment such as stop work orders, must be meted out to parties which have committed offences.

## 5. WARNING AND AWARENESS

There is often a lack of adequate signboards at construction sites to warn the public of possible falling objects and heavy machineries. At the very least, such signboards will serve to warn the public to stay away.

Safety policies are a top-down commitment. Implementing safety procedures is a bottom-up execution and we must start to do this seriously to achieve our committed safety statement. Safety First, We Care. ■

## IEM DIARY OF EVENTS

**Title: Talk on Fasteners to Concrete and Steel: New Developments, Failures and Solutions**

**5<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

Organised by : Civil and Structural  
Engineering Technical  
Division

Time : 5.30 a.m. - 7.30 p.m.

CPD/PDP : 2

Kindly note that the scheduled events below are subject to change. Please visit the IEM website at [www.myiem.org.my](http://www.myiem.org.my) for more information on the upcoming events.