



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Letter to the Editor

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A YEAR SINCE DOSH REPORTED THAT 92.5% OF CONSTRUCTION SITES FLOUT SAFETY SPECIFICATIONS BUT NOTHING HAS CHANGED

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is shocked and saddened by the news that a motorist was crushed to death when a crane hook fell and hit her car as she was driving by a construction site along Jalan Raja Chulan last Thursday. Since the death of Chin Khoo Sing, all the relevant parties - contractor, developer and DOSH - have expressed their determination to get to the bottom of the incident. DOSH has said that they will be investigating the contractor company. The contractor company on the other hand claims they are cooperating with the police to find the Indonesian worker who was operating the crane and had fled after the incident had taken place. Clearly blame shifting is happening here, but who should actually be held responsible for the life of the young woman that was needlessly lost?

Since the incident that took place in Alor Gajah sometime in June 2015 and DOSH reported that 92.5% of construction sites in the country do not meet specifications set by them, CAP has been continuously stressing the need for an overhaul of the construction industry's system.

People more often choose to disregard rules and regulations if they believe that they will benefit from doing so and that they can get away with it; despite the possible negative impact to others.

Apply this philosophy to the construction industry and it is no wonder that all these construction site accidents are happening. DOSH has already proven that contractors will cut corners where they believe they can when they reported that almost all construction sites in the nation flout safety specifications.

This is why CAP has always believed that DOSH needs to carry out more frequent safety checks and to take more severe enforcement action towards errant contractors. However, a year has passed and DOSH is still moving at the same pace and contractors are still breaking the law. Nothing has changed.

Following the incident that took place last Thursday, DOSH has claimed that they are severely understaffed in the big cities where many development projects are being carried out. An English daily reported the director general of DOSH stating that out of the 60 technical employees that they have in their Kuala Lumpur office, only 12 are tasked to inspect construction sites. The article also mentioned that construction site inspections are a lengthy process that are only done every 15 months.

Based on this information CAP has a few questions for DOSH:-

- In an area where it is claimed there are over 600 construction sites are in operations, why are there only 12 technical employees tasked with inspecting construction sites? If no special certification is needed to be a construction site inspector then it is just a matter of increasing the number of technical employees tasked with inspecting construction sites and decreasing the number that do other inspections. If the technical employees need to be specially trained to carry out construction site inspections then is the Ministry of Human Resources not aware that DOSH requires more of these specially trained technical employees? Shouldn't they be creating more vacancies in this field?
- Isn't 15 months too long in between construction sites safety checks? The equipment at construction sites are used every day for extensive periods of time. This is going to cause wear and tear on the machinery to happen much faster. In this specific case is it not more likely that there was some malfunction with the machinery that was not detected because of the long time in between safety inspections compared to the machine being tampered with? When

there is a lapse of a year and three months before another safety inspection, contractors are going to get lax with the way they handle the construction site, their workers and building equipment; and “accidents” are going to happen.

That being said, we are not saying that DOSH should be the sole party responsible for the incident that took place. The contractor should have adhered to regulations and not hired a foreign worker to drive the crane as there is no way he is certified to do so. The developer should have been more scrupulous in choosing the contractor company they hired; they should not have hired a contractor that readily breaks the law.

As such, CAP calls on the government to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate this incident and to look into the inspection process by DOSH at construction sites. We also ask that if the construction company is found guilty of any wrongdoings that they be dealt the harshest punishment possible – let us not forget that a young woman died in this tragic “accident”.

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