

Occupational Safety and Health

1. The Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (Ordinance), which has become effective since 23 May 1997, extends the coverage of employees' safety and health protection to the non-industrial sector. With the exception of domestic workers and self-employed persons, practically all staff in all sectors are covered. The legislation applies to almost all workplaces, including not only factories and construction sites, but also offices, schools, universities, hospitals, places of public entertainment and others.

2. The purposes of the Ordinance are as follows :
 - (a) to ensure the safety and health of employees when they are at work;
 - (b) to prescribe measures that will contribute to making the workplaces of employees safer and healthier for them;
 - (c) to improve the safety and health standards applicable to certain hazardous processes, plant and substances used or kept in workplaces; and
 - (d) generally to improve the safety and health aspects of working environments of employees.

3. Under the Ordinance, employers have a general duty to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safety and health of their employees at work. On the other hand, employees at work are required to take care of others and to co-operate with the employers or other persons in order to comply with requirements of the Ordinance.

4. The first set of regulations made under the Ordinance is the Occupational Safety and Health Regulation (Regulation). The objective of the Regulation is to provide for the better carrying into effect of the provisions and purposes of the Ordinance. The Regulation contains provisions for accident prevention, fire precautions, workplace environments, hygiene at workplaces, first aid at workplaces and manual handling operations. The Regulation, other than the part dealing with manual handling operations, has come into operation on 1 January 1998. Provisions on manual handling operations were implemented on 1 July 1998.

5. The Ordinance empowers occupational safety officers of the Labour Department to inspect all workplaces, investigate work-related accidents, issue improvement and suspension notices and prosecute as may be necessary. Further information and assistance on the above matters can be obtained from the following Regional Offices of Occupational Safety Operations Division of the Labour Department :

<u>Regional Offices</u>	<u>Telephones</u>
Hong Kong & Islands Region :	2835 2032
Kowloon Region :	2399 2244
New Territories East & Kwun Tong Region :	2157 8055
New Territories West Region :	2437 1541

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