

Holistic approach

Sanwah Construction ensures its employees are physically and mentally fit and alert to achieve peak performance

by douglas chew

SANWAH Construction believes it is the company's moral and professional duty to ensure the safety of its workers.

The company specialises in design and build construction projects from industrial warehouses and tertiary institutions to residential and commercial buildings, with the ability to provide turnkey construction and building solutions.

A winner of this year's bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award, the company attributes its effective safety management and safe working conditions to its site management team, project partners and its workers.

Mr Anthony Ong, Sanwah's managing director, says: "Our project teams plan ahead and consider necessary safety provisions required for our work activities prior to commencement.

"Our personnel take ownership on safety management issues, display enthusiasm and continually take interest in maintaining a safe work condition, and set a positive safety atmosphere for all our work sites."

Staff are regularly updated on safety matters and practices through site and corporate safety meetings and discussions. Most of the management and head office staff are certified auditors in quality, environment health and safety management systems.

Its management also plays a crucial role through its leadership in safety, setting a positive example through initiating and supporting safety celebrations when targets are met, such as safe working hours milestones and incident-free project completion.

It recognises the efforts of its workers, giving a monthly safety award for workers and supervisors with the best safety performance.

"The construction work environment is a high-risk and dynamic work environment that is labour

intensive with rapid evolving situations," says Mr Ong.

"An alert mind armed with the interest and knowledge on safety matters is important to manage the safety issues on site."

Prior to work beginning on the site, an internal safety audit evaluates the adequacy of its safety system and management.

During the works, risk assessments are conducted to remove or control risks and to establish appropriate safe work procedures.

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Daily and weekly site safety inspections on work conditions, safety facilities and safety arrangements are held.

Training for all workers at all levels are emphasised. New workers have to attend safety inductions, and have daily and weekly tool box meetings to discuss safety procedures.

All workers have the opportunity to attend weekly or monthly safety training sessions by trade specialists to learn about specific safety aspects related to their trade, such as electrical safety, scaffolding and piling.

Site managers, workplace safety and health (WSH) coordinators,

WSH supervisors, equipment operators and scaffolding teams are sent to relevant courses by accredited course providers to upgrade their safety skill sets.

The company has a holistic view of safety. To keep the minds of its employees alert, it includes breaks despite pressing construction schedules to promote healthy living and team bonding, reducing stress through its monthly "Exercise Day" for all managerial and supervisory staff. Yoga, night cycling and trekking, badminton and jogging are just some of the activities it had organised for Exercise Day.

While investing in safety facilities, equipment, training and safety promotions involves costs, Mr Ong knows that a safe work environment leads to better work quality and profits.

"Good safety management symbiotically improve productivity of work process," he says.

Sanwah joined the bizSAFE programme in 2012, and is now a bizSAFE Star.

Companies that are bizSAFE Stars have implemented plans for a WSH management system. This system would then have to be certified by an independent Singapore Accreditation Council accredited auditor to have met the relevant standards.

"Without complicating and adding on disruptive procedures, the bizSAFE programme systematically finetunes our current operation to make the work better, safer and improves the productivity of work process," says Mr Ong.

"Being part of the bizSAFE community puts us in the circle of like-minded individuals and corporate organisations.

"Collectively, we would be able to share information and best practices on safety matters in timely way. This constantly improves and updates our operations to the best approaches and most effective work methodology."



A safe work environment leads to better work quality and profits, says Mr Ong. PHOTO: CHONG JUNLIANG