

# Safety leads to higher productivity

Construction firm Samwoh Corporation is totally committed to providing a safe working environment for its workers

by tan bah bah

WINNING the Work Safety and Health (WSH) Council's Sharp Award for 2011 could be said to be a just reward for Samwoh Corporation's longtime commitment to ensuring a safe working environment for its employees. Winning it for the second time for the same project called for double celebration.

The construction company bagged the Safety and Health Award Recognition for Project (Sharp) for a Land Transport Authority Project – upgrading West Coast Highway and Clementi Road Junction – for the second year running. It also won the award in 2010.

Nothing was left to chance when Samwoh decided to go for the award.

Strategies were brainstormed, selected and adopted for the WSH Council challenge. Strategically, three areas – process, people and environment – were selected and focused on to develop excellent work safety and health management.

Besides these areas, effective communication and control, training and awareness and employee involvement and participation were the key approaches adopted to cultivate WSH culture and to maintain an injury-free worksite.

For effective communication and control, risk associated with critical hazards was communicated to all employees via daily safety talks, project coordination and WSH meetings.

"Our workers and supervisors were encouraged to identify hazards at worksites and communicate with the WSH team. Personnel who were actively involved in hazard identification were rewarded," says Mr Leow Boon Wee, Samwoh's senior operations manager.

Training and awareness was another key factor that contributed significantly to raising WSH standards of the company. Regular training was provided for all foremen and supervisors. WSH personnel were also encouraged to attend WSH forums, seminars and courses to keep them updated on changes in the industry.

At the managerial level, competent personnel were encouraged to take the "Design for Safety Coordinator Course" (DfSC). Recently, the company's professional engineer, planning manager and project manager attended a two-day course on DfSC which helped them understand the concept of safety at the design and building stage.

Employee participation and involvement during the whole project tenure was maintained at high levels. A behavioural reward model system was implemented at worksites where workers and supervisor were rewarded for their safe behavior. This

encouraged other colleagues to do the same.

All this is really par for the course for Samwoh which believes employees are its main assets.

Assets need to be protected and cultured in order to enhance productivity. Safety and productivity are two sides of the same coin.

"With safety comes productivity," says Mr Elvin Koh, managing director of Samwoh. "When our employees know that the company is looking after them well, they will be able to work more confidently and productively."

Corporate commitment is demonstrated by the fact that some of its senior management staff have been involved in various key industry efforts to promote work safety and health.

For example, director Koh Hoon Lye is a member of the Work Safety and Health Council's Construction and Landscaping Committee. Environment, Health and Safety Manager Bhupendra Singh Baliyan

is on the technical committee on personal safety and health of SPRING.

He is also director for continual professional development IOSH (Singapore Branch) and a member of the health and safety engineering technical committee of IES. Active participation and involvement in WSH activities provide a platform for sharing ideas as well as bringing back lessons to the company.

Samwoh sees achieving work safety and health as dynamic and an unending process, spurred on by real-time demand from clients and developers for evidence which reflects the commitment of the company to high WSH standards.

Above all, it is about teamwork. Samwoh intends to invite all stakeholders including subcontractors for a thanksgiving ceremony for winning Sharp, which it hopes will strengthen partnerships for further upgrading of WSH standards.

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