

PRESS RELEASE

Occupational Safety Needs Investment

On December 5th 2011, an award ceremony was held in hall 101 on the first floor of the International Conference Center of the College of Medicine of National Taiwan University to celebrate the achievements of the “Safety Investment Campaign for Small- and Mid-sized Enterprises”. Kuo Fong-Yu, Deputy Minister of the Council of Labor Affairs, attended the ceremony in person to bestow the awards and to hold a speech. In total, 30 enterprises and 19 employees were awarded. The Council of Labor Affairs declares that the selected companies and employees were not only rewarded, but also given appreciation letters addressed to the units and staff of their companies that have contributed to the improvement of occupational safety.

Mr Kuo said that enterprises should on their own initiative strive to improve occupational safety. However, as small- and mid-sized companies have a smaller budget and are currently facing the international economical crisis, they seldom have the means to invest in the improvement of occupational safety. Therefore, the Council’s Institute of Occupational Safety and Health launched a strategy in 2009 to use energy saving as a means to release more resources for the improvement of occupational safety. Small- and mid-sized enterprises all over the country were counseled in energy saving, and from the money that could be saved by energy saving, more than 15% were diverted to be invested in the promotion of occupational safety, i.e. to improve the sections of enterprises with safety problems. This was a great breakthrough in solving the problem how to gain resources for the improvement of occupational safety, and at the same time awakened the consciousness of small- and mid-sized enterprises with regard to occupational safety and health. Within three years, the companies that accepted the counseling were able to reduce the occurrence of disablement by 44.3% and injuries due to work accidents by 20.9%. At the same

time, a plus of 183 million NT\$ was made thanks to energy saving measures, while 54 million NT\$ were invested in the improvement of occupational safety (the average proportion for the improvement of occupational safety by the enterprises was 29.5%). Furthermore, there was an improvement in 547 cases of machineries with a high risk of injuries by cutting or entanglement and of insufficient ventilation systems causing health risks for workers. Even more detailed achievements were presented at the award ceremony. By initiating awards for investments in occupational safety, the Government wishes to show the industrial sector its concern for the importance of occupational safety. Rewarding companies that achieved improvements in the field of occupational safety and health and who invested in this issue might also make others follow their good example.

The award-winning enterprises were able to improve the occupational safety standards in their factories and to reduce the number of work accidents. For instance, Hong-Yao Industrial Co. Ltd., a company employing 50 workers, undertook a great effort in cooperation with its staff to improve safety at work, with an increase of investments in occupational safety of 40% in 2009 up to 100% in 2011, resulting in a significant reduction of occupational injuries. Siang-Yu Industrial Co. Ltd., a company manufacturing metal products and employing 45 workers, is a traditional enterprise where physical labor is hard and intensive. The company employs physically challenged workers at the assembly line. Very remarkably, the company's investments in occupational safety even surpassed the profit due to the energy saving. The Council of Labor stresses that a company that values its employees' safety and health higher than its profit and has made the improvement of the working environment its first priority, is a most praiseworthy company indeed.

As Deputy Minister Kuo pointed out, the prevention of work accidents is not such a difficult task. All it needs is that the bosses give a little more thought to safety

in the working environment, then accidents can be definitely reduced. The award ceremony and presentation of achievements is also an opportunity for the invited enterprises to share their experience, to boost the motivation of small- and mid-sized enterprises to do more about occupational safety and to care for the safety and health of the workers. Thus, the Council of Labor would like to call once more upon the enterprises: “Occupational safety needs your investment!”