

Scheme to spur healthier office lifestyles

New Green Mark programme to recognise firms that act to boost workers' well-being

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Firms that design green offices and encourage their employees to quit smoking, exercise more and eat healthily will be recognised under a new government scheme.

Called the Green Mark for Healthier Workplaces, the scheme is an expansion of the Building and Construction Authority's (BCA) benchmarking programme to acknowledge energy-saving buildings.

The regulator is working with the Health Promotion Board (HPB) on this latest addition.

The scheme was announced by Minister of State for National Development and Manpower Zaqy Mohamad yesterday at an industry event attended by more than 300 business leaders.

Mr Zaqy said office designs, such as ventilation and lighting systems, have an impact on energy use and their occupants' health and well-being.

So "it makes sense to dovetail the two objectives, to create environmentally friendly and healthy office spaces... This was the impetus behind this new scheme", he added.

Ten companies took part in the four-month pilot programme that started in May, and six were certified as of last month. The rest are working on their certification, according to BCA.

Facility Link, a firm which builds offices, hosts health screenings and workout sessions such as Zumba classes. It has banned smoking on its premises in Sungei Kadut and in-

troducted healthier food options such as fruits in the pantry.

The firm with 140 employees also recycles leftover materials from renovation processes to use as furniture and decor.

"We are currently thinking of other activities to continue attracting staff to the workout sessions," said general manager Jason Chok.

Both BCA and HPB have incentive schemes to help more small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) follow Facility Link's example, said Mr Zaqy.

For example, BCA will co-fund SMEs up to \$40,000 for the firms to be certified under this new scheme, as part of its current Green Mark Incentive Scheme for Existing Buildings and Premises.

HPB also has the SME Health+ and Workplace Alliance for Health schemes.

At the event, Mr Zaqy also revealed results of a two-year pilot programme that aims to get building occupants to save energy.

Currently, six organisations are participating in the pilot that started in September last year.

"Several have already achieved significant energy savings," Mr Zaqy said.

For example, GIC installed 7,000 advanced motion-activated lighting units in its local office, and they are expected to save 105,600 kilowatt-hours in a year.

Swissotel Merchant Court saved more than 100 MW-hours after adopting energy-saving measures. Now, its laundry department operates machines at full load instead of half load as it used to.

Employees have also been encouraged to use the stairs. Reminders to switch off their computers before they leave have also worked, said assistant executive manager for rooms, Mr Alexander Kandalaft.

Mr Zaqy said BCA will work with the Singapore Green Building Council to develop standardised toolkits for firms targeting similar results.

"We wish to see more following in their paths, and will do our part to support," he added.

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Facility Link is one of 10 companies that took part in the four-month pilot programme of the Green Mark for Healthier Workplaces scheme. Its meeting rooms, such as this one, are built with recycled materials. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG