

Stiffer penalties for workplace safety lapses

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Companies found lacking in workplace safety and health standards will now face stiffer penalties, including a longer minimum period in which they have to stop work.

Stop-work orders will now last at least three weeks, up from two previously.

Companies slapped with a stop-work order or found with a workplace fatality will also risk having their work pass privileges temporarily curtailed, making them unable to hire new foreign workers until they have resolved safety issues.

Announcing the changes yesterday, Minister of State for Manpower Sam Tan said they were in response to the recent spate of workplace deaths: There were 28 in the first four months of this year, six more than in the same period last year.

Mr Tan, who spoke at a surprise construction site inspection in Geylang Road, said a longer stop-work order was a “harsh” financial penalty for companies but stressed that Safety remains paramount.

“If companies don’t take safety seriously, we can’t take their commercial interest as seriously,” he said.

For a company hiring a hundred workers, an extra week of a stop-work order could cost tens of thousands in salaries paid, but for no work done—and this does not include damages levelled by the developer for missing deadlines.

The Geylang Road worksite between Lorong 19 and 21 was issued with a stop-work order after the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) visit. The MOM declined to reveal the name of the company.

New conditions for lifting stop-work orders now include compulsory refresher training on all areas of weakness, as well as a re-evaluation of the site’s work safety and health management system by approved external auditors.

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