

By post and by email at dd-d-3@labour.gov.hk

27 January 2025

Ms CHOI Yuen Ching
Labour Department
Unit 812, 8/F
Grand City Plaza
1-17 Sai Lau Kok Road
Tsuen Wan

Dear Ms CHOI

**Consultation on the
Revision of Guidance Notes on
Work Safety and Health of Air-conditioning Works**

On behalf of the Institution, I am pleased to present to you our views and suggestions as set out in the enclosure for your consideration on the captioned subject. This submission supersedes the one submitted to you on 17 January 2025.

The Institution welcomes the opportunity to work with the Government and offer our expertise and experience on the area of concern if and when it is needed.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Ms Sandy SO
Senior Executive Manager –
External Affairs

Enclosure

**Views from The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
on the Draft Revision of Guidance Notes on Work Safety and
Health of Air-conditioning Works**

The Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE) is pleased to present our views on the Labour Department's draft revision of *Guidance Notes on Work Safety and Health of Air-conditioning Works*.

2. While the HKIE concurs with the general principles outlined in the Guidance Notes, we would like to present the following perspectives and suggestions for the Labour Department's consideration.

Section 2: Common Work Safety and Health Issues of Air-conditioning Works

3. Although the Guidance Notes identify several crucial safety and health risks associated with air-conditioning works, the HKIE suggests additionally including manual handling as a high-risk activity in the Notes' scope. . Manual handling, which entails lifting, carrying, and moving objects, poses substantial risks such as musculoskeletal injuries to air-conditioning installers. The HKIE recommends appending a new section to the Notes devoted to manual handling, including the accompanying risks and the corresponding preventive measures. Such an addition would constitute a more comprehensive framework for ensuring safety and health for performers of air-conditioning works.

Section 3: Work at Height

4. The HKIE welcomes the Guidance Notes' emphasis on the safety hazards attendant on working at height, which is an inevitable element in air-conditioning works. Nevertheless, specific suggestions are offered for this Section to enhance its clarity and enforceability.

5. Regarding Section 3.1, which covers the use of suitable working platforms, the HKIE recommends specifying the above-ground height(s) for which these platforms should be deployed. Such specifications would clarify the suitability of each type of platform for works carried out at certain heights and ensure that workers are provided with the appropriate equipment, including working platforms, to suit the specific conditions under which the high-risk tasks are to be carried out.

6. Section 3.2 specifies the requirements for scaffolds, including the use of toe boards. The HKIE recommends that the toe boards' minimum thickness be explicitly stated and that the suggested materials for them be listed. Such clarifications are necessary for addressing certain misunderstandings about the safe use of scaffolds in the industry, which potentially lead to non-safety concerns.

7. It is stated in Section 3.3, which concerns the safe use of truss-out scaffolds, that scaffolds should be designed by a professional engineer. Nonetheless, the HKIE noted that there is currently no mechanism for enforcing this recommendation. To ensure enforcement and compliance, it is suggested that the Labour Department implement a legal requirement for scaffold designs to be reviewed and approved by a professional engineer through the use of the prescribed Form 5. Such a measure would be in alignment with the current requirement for temporary working platforms, drawing consistency across regulations.

8. The photo adopted in Section 3.3 to illustrate a scaffold structure is proposed to be replaced by one which shows the use of a toe board as required by the statutory rules.

9. To tighten the requirement for a professional design review in Section 3.3, while the first bullet point requires scaffolds to be designed by a professional engineer, the fourth bullet point should stipulate a requirement for similar professional review should a major alteration to the scaffolds take place. As such, the HKIE recommends an amendment that requires professional engineers to review and approve any major alterations to scaffolds.

10. It is also stated in Section 3.3 that, after their erection, scaffolds must be inspected and certified by a competent person. While this is a crucial provision, the HKIE noted that such inspections are often omitted in practice. The HKIE suggests that the Labour Department devise a scheme to enforce this requirement, such as an online system where contractors can upload inspection records and certifications. This would increase accountability and ensure compliance with inspection requirements.

11. Similarly, the Labour Department is urged to introduce an electronic system to ensure effective monitoring of workers who must wear full body harnesses while working on scaffolds. For instance, workers could be required to upload photos to show their adoption of full gears before the commencement of work. This would provide an additional layer of enforcement and safety assurance.

12. In connection with the final bullet point in Section 3.3, which requires contractors to ensure compliance with certain safety measures, the Labour Department is suggested to establish a system under which contractors may upload evidence demonstrating that the relevant requirements have been met. This would provide a clear and verifiable record of compliance.

Section 5: Refrigerants

13. The HKIE appreciates the comprehensive coverage of refrigerant safety in Section 5, but noted the use of term “Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)” in Section 5.2, which has been obsolete and should be replaced by “Safety Data Sheet (SDS)” according to international safety standards.

Section 6: Notes to Workers

14. It should be remarked that, in Section 6, the requirement that anchor devices used with fall arresting equipment should be certified safe by a professional structural/mechanical engineer (or a competent person) is inconsistent with the requirements outlined in other Sections of the Guidance Notes. The HKIE recommends that this requirement be aligned with professional standards mentioned elsewhere in the Notes.

15. The HKIE reiterates the importance of incorporating considerations for manual handling, in this Section as in Section 2. In view of the possible injuries that might result from lifting and moving weighty objects such as refrigerants and gas cylinders, addressing the risks and preventive measures associated with manual handling will enhance the Guidance Notes' comprehensiveness.