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Integrity in workplace safety

WHEN implementing good occupational safety and health (OSH) practices at any workplace, attention must be paid to corruption prevention and promotion of integrity.

Moral and ethical principles are key aspects of integrity. In the workplace, those who act with integrity will always tell the truth, are accountable, transparent and reliable, and treat co-workers, stakeholders and customers with respect.

If someone acts with integrity, he or she will do the right thing even when no one is watching.

Civil servants, employees of government-linked companies (GLCs) and those from the corporate sector should always uphold integrity and avoid corrupt practices.

Integrity in the workplace must be instilled when anyone joins an organisation so that over time, it will become part of his or her

identity. According to the Business Ethics Institute of Malaysia (BEIM), eliminating fraud is an important aspect of sustainable safety management, especially in managing OSH, accidents or near misses at the workplace.

The following are some examples of fraudulent practices that could impact safety outcomes in one way or another:

i. Purchase of low quality or sub-standard personal protective equipment (PPE) or tools, increasing the risk of injury to employees and the public;

ii. Inaccurate records, resulting in wrong assessment of a hazardous situation or characteristics of a product, or wrong appropriation of much needed support to fix a risky environment;

iii. Taking short cuts or circumventing standard operating procedures, resulting in unsafe practices;

iv. Abuse of power to achieve personal goals, resulting in the exploitation of employees; and

v. Conflict of interest, for example awarding contracts to less competent vendors, creating safety hazards and exposing employees to hazardous environments without adequate protection.

It cannot be denied that only integrity can help to address these problems and prevent corrupt practices.

We should neither tolerate corruption nor allow it to fester in our society, including among OSH practitioners.

We should educate OSH practitioners to embrace integrity and loathe corruption.

We have to emphasise moral values so that when they are at the workplace, they would realise the importance of not getting involved in unethical and corrupt practices.

While efforts by the Malaysian

Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in fighting corruption are welcomed, it is obvious that safety in the workplace must also be among its priorities, particularly when there are concerns over policy and risk management issues.

If corruption involves OSH practitioners and their agencies, it may result in accidents that could cause injury or death.

We cannot be unconcerned and complacent about corruption because it attacks not only the economic and social fabric of society but also the moral foundations of order.

The point that needs to be emphasised is that we should drive OSH excellence with integrity for the future.

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