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Act on safety bill, workers urge govt

A WORKERS' group yesterday urged the Labour Department to pass, as soon as possible, the bill on compulsory employment of safety officers in high risk industries.

Under the proposed Industrial Safety Officer Bill, high risk industries such as construction and shipbuilding, will have to employ safety officers.

The bill was first proposed more than two years ago but its implementation is understood to have been hampered by a manpower shortage.

The president of the Society of Builders, Ho Sai-chu, said it was for this reason that it would take five years to fully implement the law.

However, the Association for the Rights of Industrial Accident Victims, hit out at the society saying it was

simply an excuse for not implementing it sooner.

It pointed out that there were 200 qualified safety officers in Hongkong who could help prevent accidents at construction sites.

The association said it even suspected the sincerity of builders in ensuring safety on construction sites.

In a letter to the Labour Commissioner, it urged the department to speed up its training programme.

They said 150 safety officers should be trained each year with a diploma to be issued after completion of the one-year course.

The association said that another 50 employees should undergo a three-month training course as safety supervisors.

As for the implementation of the bill, it said that sites with more than

50 employees should have both safety officers and safety supervisors, while those with less than 50 workers could have a safety supervisor, for the time being, to help relieve the manpower shortage.

The association said it should be the duty of safety officers to form safety committees with worker and management representatives.

They should also gather workers' opinions, study the causes of accidents, educate workers on safety and improve the working environment.

The association said that the bill should also be extended to other high risk industries, apart from construction and shipbuilding.

And, it said, the five construction sites with the highest accident rate should be announced on a quarterly basis to serve as a warning.