

S. L. M. P.

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Almost all factories break safety laws

Almost all factories in Hongkong are violating industrial safety laws by having at least some unguarded dangerous machinery, according to the Labour Department's Chief Factory Inspector, Mr John Wood.

As a result, about 40 per cent of last year's 37,000 industrial accidents were

related to dangerous machines.

In an effort to improve industrial safety, particularly in the area of dangerous machinery, the Labour Department issued a set of regulations last year specifying what parts of dangerous machines should be guarded.

The department also launched a campaign to persuade factory owners to install guards on three types of machines most likely to cause serious accidents — power presses, plastic injection moulding machines and sewing machine needles.

Factory operators found disobeying the law face immediate prosecution because the department believes that sufficient publicity has been given to the matter, and factory owners could not honestly plead ignorance.

The fine for failing to install guards on dangerous machines was raised from \$2,000 to \$5,000 last year with the introduction of the new regulations.

The only way to make sure factory owners comply with the law is to carry out frequent inspections, Mr Wood said.

But the department has only 96 factory inspectors at present and they have to inspect 42,000 industrial establishments. In addition, they also have to visit 1,700 to 2,000 construction sites.



Mr Kan checking a machine with two-hand control devices. Looking on is Mr Wood.

Forty inspectors will be hired this year to help strengthen the force, but the men would require two years' training before they can work independently.

Last Friday, an S.C.M. Post reporting team accompanied a divisional factory inspector in a visit to a stationery factory in Shamshuipo.

The factory, Hongkong Stationery Manufacturing Co Ltd, was fined \$1,000 last July for having unguarded dangerous power presses.

The inspector, Mr Kan

Hon-sang, has recently again recommended that the factory be fined.

Action is pending.

The intention at first was that the S.C.M. Post team should accompany the inspector on a surprise visit.

But the department said that reporters could not be taken into factories without prior permission from the owners. The Hongkong Stationery Manufacturing Co, with about 100 employees, is in Mr Wood's opinion an "above-average" Hongkong factory.