



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SMALL AND MICRO  
ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

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**The Honourable Minister’s Speech**

**in Brief**

The Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, Errol McLeod, has urged employers to be transparent and honest with their stakeholders and not keep them in the dark about the organization’s “achievements and challenges.”

In his delivery of the feature address at the AMCHAMTT Excellence in Health Safety Security Environment (HSSE) Awards Ceremony 2011 this evening, Minister McLeod signaled the importance for leaders to recognize the benefit of “creating a collective mission” that is valued and respected by those people who embody the culture of the organization.

*“When each worker recognizes that safety begins with his/her personal commitment to the concept, when safety is internalized, maintaining standards will no longer be a burden.”*

*“Management must be sensitive to the possibility of lip service to safety issues and find creative ways to assist employees in recognizing the intrinsic value of safety for each person in the workplace,”* Minister McLeod said.

While he commended those employers who - through the facilitation of “awareness and understanding” - have recognized “the importance of health and safety” dynamics, the Minister said there was still a need for HSSE “systems and techniques”, to be “integrated into businesses in a structured way.”

Minister McLeod added that employers must be prepared to deal with crisis situations within its respective industries while at the same time, ensure that all is done to avoid and/or reduce the likelihood of business activity having an adverse effect on the nation’s natural resources.

In echoing the words of the legendary Greek philosopher Aristotle, the Minister concluded on a note which helped to set the tone for any genuine attempt to achieving HSSE success at the corporate level: *“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

## Salutations

- Honourable Errol McLeod, Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development
- Dr. The Honourable Fuad Khan, Minister of Health
- Mrs. Joy Persad – Myers, Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and other Ministry officials
- Mr. Simon Aqui, President of the American Chamber of Commerce of Trinidad & Tobago and other AmCham T&T Board of Directors and members
- Mr. Wade Hamilton, Vice President of Technical Services, The National Gas Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited

## Other Sponsors

- Mr. Ian Welch, Managing Director - PCS  
Nitrogen Trinidad Limited
- Mr. Ather Qureshi, Operations Manager - BHP  
Billiton (Trinidad and Tobago) and other BHP  
representatives
- Professor Anthony Joseph, Executive Director - The  
Occupational Safety and Health Agency and other  
members of the Agency
- AmCham T&T Board of Directors
- Members of the Media
- Other distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen



**REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

**FEATURE ADDRESS**

**BY**

**THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND SMALL AND  
MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT**

**ERROL MC LEOD**

**AT THE**

**AMCHAMTT EXCELLENCE IN HSSE**

**(Health, Safety, Security and the Environment)**

**AWARDS CEREMONY 2011**

Regency Ballrooms V & VI

Hyatt Regency Trinidad

#1 Dock Road,

Port-of-Spain

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011

6:00 p.m.

The well known Social Psychologist Abraham Maslow said, “health, safety and security are basic human needs in the hierarchy of needs that undergird human existence.” These are necessities that businesses seek to meet in various ways, and this evening we are here to commend those who recognize the value of meeting the health, safety and security needs of our country’s valued human resources.

This evening’s awards ceremony represents our moment in time to reflect on what we as a young nation have achieved, and to increase our commitment to future growth and environmental security. The responsibility rests with us to create industries premised on high standards in environmental health and safety. To this end, we must not allow the clarion call for greater HSSE Excellence to go unheeded.

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Our society's growing sensitivity to security issues, a more educated workforce, international standards that are demanding quality at every level mandate that as a responsible government we make the intelligent response.

Individual HSSE systems and techniques have evolved over the years, but still need to be integrated into businesses in a structured way. This may include the preparation of a documented policy that is reflective of the principles of action and aspirations with respect to HSSE. It may also involve adequate risk assessment that encapsulates the formulation of progressive risk control measures.

The stability of this strategy will generate consensus that HSSE plans are developed with people focused on achieving their objectives and responses. Within your respective establishments, senior management must be the standard bearer. We all know that any programme destined for success,

must have the full support of those who lead our organizations. It is imperative that leaders lead. I commend those of our leaders here today and our sponsors who recognize the importance of health and safety. They have demonstrated awareness and understanding of the importance of managing HSSE dynamics through communication between all investors in their organization.

The Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is proud of OSHA's contribution to ensuring that international standards for health and safety are being maintained and constantly updated to match those of more developed countries. We see evidence of OSHA at work when outside of our work places we note MUSTER points. We see OSHA at our construction sites as evidenced by our caution tapes, helmeted workers and numerous safety signs. We see growing sensitivity in our educational curriculums and

institutions and our government's support for these programmes. We would also like to commend the many men and women who have embraced the opportunity to educate themselves in health and safety.

To advance the macro-development of HSSE best practices, the Government continues to partner with our labour stakeholders. At the heart of our commitment to steering a culture of HSSE success is the core belief that makes people the centre of our development. This code of conduct is only achieved through innovative commitment to execute HSSE initiatives.

The economic growth augured by the fervour of the Medium and Small Enterprise (MSE) industry in our nation has elevated its profile on the domestic and regional stage. This increased status has further compelled the Government to consider the actual and perceived risks that MSE entrepreneurs maybe

exposed to. Arguably, the overall threats to public safety when compared to larger companies are relatively low. Yet, the proliferation of expert opinion and practical deduction cannot be overlooked. These responses suggest that supporting standard HSSE practice and policy guidelines would provide this emerging industry with a benchmark of good practice. It would also enable other stakeholders to appreciate how organizational safety risks can be isolated and managed.

As a regional leader, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is also unwavering in its dedication to the protection of our natural resources. In this regard, one of our readily identifiable priorities is to engender responsible corporate governance among all sectors of labour. This focus emphasizes the inclusion of the MSE sector in the prevention of avoidable incidents such as fire disasters, oil spills, effluent discharges

and gas emissions. However, where these accidents are unavoidable, we will partner with our stakeholders in being swift and diligent in our response and learn from each incident, ultimately improving our resolve to be prepared.

Contemporary HSSE practices must raise the bar for overall business performance for our economy. In Trinidad and Tobago, HSSE awareness, practices and delivery are all of equal relevance. It is necessary that one rubric does not take precedence in sacrifice of another. The exponential growth of a world that is constantly on the pulse of technological, innovative and social change indicates a dire need for a synergy of HSSE concepts.

Fellow stakeholders consider what aspects of your message stimulate the members of your establishment to conscious action in safety issues. Showcase to them the various

perspectives that a sustainable culture of HSSE excellence will impact on them. Highlight how it will enrich their lives, increase the quantity and quality of their labour, stabilize the physical and social environment and make their futures more defined.

Emotional resistance to change is the hidden force that measures progress. As leaders/managers, we are sometimes unaware of how this suppressed resistance undermines our actions. When each worker recognizes that safety begins with his/her personal commitment to the concept, when safety is internalized, maintaining standards will no longer be a burden.

Management must be sensitive to the possibility of lip service to safety issues and find creative ways to assist employees in recognizing the intrinsic value of safety for each person in the work place. This may include appropriate incentives or other

programmes that will encourage sensitivity to safety in the environment.

However, this must be a mandate of shared responsibility. It is virtually impossible to lead the charge for significant change from a stance of solitude. All great leaders of our times have recognised the value of creating a collective mission that everyone values. They are also cognisant of the urgency of communicating these objectives in ways that each individual can personally relate to and support at a practical level.

Making safety a priority demands strong leadership, leadership such as evidenced at this awards ceremony. We therefore encourage our corporate citizens to identify, recruit and establish a team of strong leaders who possess the priority skills, expertise and attitudes that companies need to help us

meet international standards of health and safety in our work places.

In the interest of transparency and fostering shared responsibility, I would like to encourage each of you to keep your employees and co-workers informed about your achievements and challenges.

Ladies and gentlemen, the courage to depart from the familiar is often difficult and you may encounter fierce resistance. However, I would implore you to be persistent in your HSSE mandate. In the global village of information and communication technology (ICT) advances, economic transition and social enlightenment, education is an indispensable tool in developing a culture of HSSE Excellence in our country. Creating long-term partnerships with educational institutions will expose students to ICT integration,

effective leadership and provide opportunities for their professional development as emerging members of the workforce. Your response options to these endeavours must regularly incorporate HSSE excellence into your organisational functions. In the words of legendary Greek philosopher Aristotle, *“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

Ladies and gentlemen, this occasion of celebration will find us as labour stakeholders better informed about our duties and obligations in achieving HSSE Excellence. The present challenge for the Ministry is to elaborate upon the people-centred objective of the Government. However, it can only operate effectively with the collaborative efforts and support of a productive and innovative labour sector. This sector in turn must be bolstered by entrepreneurs that are wholeheartedly

committed to pursuing a culture of HSSE Excellence. HSSE Excellence is the way of the future. Let us strive to make it everyone's business.

I thank you for partnering with the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development in our continued efforts to maintain health and safety in this our beloved country. At this time please allow me to commend AMCHAM for the coordination of this evening's venture and congratulate this evening's awardees. Ladies and Gentlemen my best wishes for a wonderful evening and may God continue to bless our Nation.