

**Highlights of the
First Occupational Safety and Health Summit in North Luzon
Theme: Zero Accident Program (ZAP)
Key to Safe, Healthy and Productive Wokplaces**

March 2 – 3, 2009
Baguio Country Club

The First Occupational Safety and Health Summit in North Luzon held in March 2 – 3, 2009 at the Baguio Country Club successfully brought together close to 300 occupational health and safety specialists from government, management, labor, NGOs, civil society and academe to discuss trends on OSH in the Philippines and issues affecting the regions of North Luzon, as well as offer solutions/responses/alternatives to such issues and trends.

With the theme of “Zero Accident Program (ZAP): Key to Safe, Healthy and Productive Workplaces”, the North Luzon Summit echoes the fundamental rallying call for uncompromised safety and health of workers as the country braces itself from the effects of the global financial crisis. It recognised the challenges of an increasingly complex world of work on the promotion and sustainability of OSH. It also underscored the conviction that the pervasive economic affliction must not be used as a free pass to dispense with the goals of the National Zero Accident Program (ZAP) which has made headway in the implementation of the National Medium Term OSH Plan 2006-2010 at the national, regional and local levels. It called upon CEOs and workers as well that the Global Crisis is not an excuse for making workers stand on unsafe platforms, for being exposed to toxic chemicals and for other risky or hazardous practices and processes in the quest to outdo competitors. The choice is between prevention of work-related accidents, deaths, illnesses, and injuries as against more costly and devastating alternatives as illnesses and accidents, medical treatment and rehabilitation.

More than 30 resource persons provided their views on OSH conditions, challenges, and breakthroughs in various sectors covering the manufacturing, agriculture, health care, power generation and the government, among others. The presentations profiled several successful workplace programs that may be emulated as these companies provided examples of innovative measures to confront a wide variety of safety and health risks.

Equally thought provoking were the discussions on environment protection. These presentations have made their case on the benefits of green business. Greening of the supply chain not only results to significant savings but may be an answer to sustain, if not strengthen the competitiveness of companies.

Not to be ignored are the policy interventions and initiatives coming from the government fostered through tripartism. The attention given to priority sectors such as the pyrotechnics, shipbuilding, agriculture, including the swine industry has produced concrete guidelines, heightened awareness of OSH and enhanced partnerships among the different government agencies, workers groups, employers organizations, NGOs and the civil society.

Other papers mirrored the aspiration of extending OSH services and protection to more workers in a larger number of workplaces around the country. They indicated the increasing number and wider distribution of OSH advocates now engaged in promoting OSH not only in their own milieu but beyond their present spheres of influence. Emphasis was put in using OSH in corporate social responsibility programs.

Still we face continuing challenges and gaps. Recommendations for the improvement of reporting, recording and notification of work-illnesses and injuries must be given serious consideration for a logical and sound basis in prioritizing policies and programs especially under conditions of limited financial as well as human resources. There is also a clamor for the crafting, passage and implementation of both relevant laws and regulations and alternative approaches and strategies in traditional and emerging concerns. We must not only act fast but also efficiently and effectively to such concerns especially in the tighter global market due to prevailing economic conditions.

The Resolution, approved overwhelmingly by the participants to the Summit, has captured all of these aspirations.