

An Interview With Edwin Yap

PRESIDENT OF THE SINGAPORE INSTITUTION OF SAFETY OFFICERS

This interview with Edwin Yap examines regulatory issues and trade association opportunities in Singapore and throughout Asia Pacific.

IPS: *What is your educational and professional background, and how did you become involved in occupational safety and health?*

Edwin Yap: I hold a bachelor of engineering (mechanical) degree from Nanyang Technology University and a double master of science degree (safety, health and environmental technology and industrial system engineering) from the National University of Singapore. I started my career as a safety engineer with a multinational metalworking company.

IPS: *What are your current responsibilities as ESIS Inc.'s managing director for Asia Pacific?*

EY: I manage risk control services operations in Singapore, Malaysia and China. I am also actively involved in conducting industrial hygiene surveys, developing people-oriented safety programs, machine guarding and ergonomics assessments, and conducting SH&E audits for manufacturing plants throughout Asia Pacific.

IPS: *Does your employer support your involvement with SISO?*

EY: ESIS Inc. supports my volunteer service with SISO, and the company has also demonstrated its support of ASSE.

IPS: *The company offers clients SH&E services such as training, risk assessments and others. From your perspective, which business sectors are most in need of your services, and why do you think that demand exists?*

EY: Risk assessment skills are a safety professional's core competency, and lifelong learning is always supported by any forward-thinking organization. To this end, services in risk assessment and SH&E training will always be in demand

IPS: *How has your SISO membership helped you advance in your career as a safety professional?*

EY: I have been a SISO member since the beginning of my safety career and have benefited from my senior colleagues in this field. The network that SISO has built over the years has formed a mobile SH&E encyclopedia, which has helped me advance as well.

IPS: *What professional challenges do you face as SISO president?*

EY: Leading a 33-year-old association with the dynamic SH&E situation in Singapore is never easy.

However, these are exciting challenges, and I believe with our passion for safety, SISO stands out.

IPS: *What are your top goals for SISO under your leadership?*

EY: Increase membership, enhance professional competency within our membership and raise our profile in international affairs. We have also developed a SISO 2018 strategic plan to align with the government's Ministry WSH 2018 Work Plan to reduce workplace fatalities to 1.8 by 2018.

IPS: *What new benefits and services does SISO plan to provide to enhance membership in the future?*

EY: One significant benefit we are working on is tracking members' safety development units for their continual professional development (compulsory for renewal of the workplace safety and health officer's certification).

IPS: *How can a prospective member become involved with SISO?*

EY: S/he can participate in SH&E workshops, seminars, conferences, exhibitions and our newsletters and also visit our website.

IPS: *How can SISO members make the most of their membership?*

EY: The easiest ways are through professional development and by helping us build our international network.

IPS: *What do you believe is the most important benefit of belonging to SISO?*

EY: The professional network and updating of safety professionals' competencies.

IPS: *What type of relationship does SISO have with the Singapore Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and other regulatory agencies in the region?*

EY: SISO has a good relationship with MOM, as they have two representatives on our executive committee. As for other regulatory agencies in the region, we are always reaching out to the occupational safety and health network for ASEAN via our ministry.



IPS: *An occupational safety and health professional requires specific technical experience and expertise. Do you believe that the SH&E profession is changing from specific expertise and experience to more of an overall generalist? If so, how do you believe this will impact the profession?*

EY: In Singapore, we have recently established a formal framework for workplace safety and health officers. This framework is divided into four levels, including safety representative, safety coordinator, safety officer and safety advisor. This competency-based framework provides a good platform for the safety professional's development. However, specialties in industrial hygiene, SH&E audits, ergonomics, etc., are still what SH&E professionals want to pursue.

IPS: *What current international SH&E issues are of greatest concern to you and the SISO leadership? What are your plans as president to address these issues?*

EY: Some global SH&E issues we foresee in the next decade are listed below. SISO hopes to leverage our international safety network to explore the impacts and mitigation factors of these potential issues.

- nanotechnology human performance enhancement;
- ervasive computing;
- hydrogen economy;
- carbon dioxide sequestration;
- obesity;
- new and emerging pests and diseases;
- biotechnology;
- terahertz technology;
- robots and artificial intelligence;
- integration of business and SH&E systems.

IPS: *You attended Safety 2008, your first ASSE professional development conference. What was your overall impression? Will you attend Safety 2009 in San Antonio?*

EY: Anyone would describe Safety 2008 in one word—"Wow!" It was definitely a great experience for me to witness such a large-scale safety conference. Jack Fearing and Stuart Wood were the key catalysts for our attendance. We plan to attend Safety 2009.

IPS: *Is SISO working with ASSE and/or IPS leadership to identify opportunities for joint ventures in global SH&E workshops and other initiatives?*

EY: It will be good if we can work on some potential joint research and development projects.

IPS: *What is your next personal or professional challenge?*

EY: Collaborating with ASSE to organize professional safety conferences in 2009.

IPS: *Any final thoughts on current or emerging global SH&E issues?*

EY: Business continuity from an SH&E point of

view will remain crucial, especially in the Asia Pacific region, as we are subject to local natural disasters and global financial turmoil. ☺

Edwin Yap is president of the Singapore Institute of Safety Officers (SISO) and the managing director of ESIS Inc. Global Risk Consulting for Asia Pacific. With more than 16 years' risk management experience, Yap provides leadership for ESIS consulting throughout the Asia Pacific region. He is a member of the Occupational Environmental and Health Society, ASSE, AIHA and the SPRING Singapore Technical Committee for Machinery Safety. He is a registered WSH workplace safety and health officer and an approved fire safety manager. Yap's awards include the Executive Director's Award from Panasonic Singapore, the President's Award for implementation of total safety culture from Seagate Technology International, and a certificate of commendation from MOM for significant contributions to occupational safety and health in Singapore.

IPS & SISO Continue to Collaborate

Ashok Garlapati, International Practice Specialty (IPS) assistant administrator, presented a paper at the World Drilling Congress 2008 in Singapore. He took the opportunity to visit with the Singapore Institution of Safety Officers' (SISO) executive committee, further strengthening the collaboration between IPS and SISO.

Discussions centered on issues such as IPS's support of SISO's May 2009 professional development conference (PDC) and coordination between SISO and ASSE's Kuwait Chapter in conducting future PDCs. For more information visit World Drilling Congress 2009, at <http://www.terrapinn.com/2009/drilling> and SISO at <http://www.siso.org.sg/www/>. ☺



[Third from left]: IPS Assistant Administrator Ashok Garlapati, CSP, with SISO Executive Committee members (from left) Mr. Neeranjan, Mr. Pak Shoon and Mr. Amresh.