# President's Message

First of all, I am delighted to share my views through the first edition of our electronic newsletter. The Executive Committee decided in August to do away with the paper edition and to exclusively publish our newsletter on our SLP website instead. This is good for the environment as it will save some trees. With our newsletter appearing exclusively in the electronic form, we hope that more members and other interested persons will visit our website. When you visit our website, could you take a few moments to provide us some feedback on the newsletter's contents, its layout and its usefulness to you and other users. Your ideas on improvement are always welcome. Keep them coming!

Secondly, I am pleased to announce that SLP is now officially represented in the Workplace Safety and Health Council (Chemical Industries) Committee. Personally, I think that this committee is long overdue. As we all know, the chemical industry is one of the main pillars of Singapore's manufacturing sector. Although the number of serious accidents including fatal ones in our chemical industry is relatively low when compared to the construction and shipbuilding industries, efforts must not be spared to continuously improve our process safety management system and safe work practices. Our industry is one that has inherent hazards that potentially can lead to major or catastrophic accidents. A number of major and catastrophic accidents have occurred in chemical and process industries in other parts of the world. These can and will happen if we let our guard down. In this period of poor economic performance for our country and the rest of the world, it is even more important to do all we can to maintain the integrity of existing good process safety management and safe work practices. There is always a temptation for companies to reduce costs in maintaining these systems, to do less or even to do away with some steps or practices perceived to be non-value adding. It seems wrongly that good safety practices are not in sync with lean manufacturing. Typical examples

of good process safety management practices that have been compromised include,

- use of less rigorous and disciplined approaches in managing process, equipment and personnel changes,
- use of leaner operating crews without a robust system to ensure that whatever the number of people left to manage the process units have sufficient technical knowledge, capability and capacity to deal with multiple tasks including handling of emergencies,
- extending periodic shutdown maintenance cycles that potentially can subject the plant equipment to higher stress when they are pushed to the limit.

As most of you may already know, the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council was formed on 1 April 2008. The Council has statutory powers (more muscle) to lead and partner industry in engagement and capability building efforts. You can find more information about the Council in the following web link www.wshc.gov.sg.

Under the Council, five industry committees were initially formed to address the specific WSH challenges in their respective sectors:

• Construction and Landscaping
• Healthcare
• Logistics and Transportation
• Marine Industries
• Metalworking and Manufacturing

Recently the Chemical Industries Committee was formed and SLP was asked to nominate a representative for the Committee. I am thus honored and privileged to represent SLP. To ensure continuity, I have nominated our Honorary Secretary, Ngiam Tong Yuen, to be the alternate representative for SLP when I cannot be present because of my work related business travel. Work is underway to finalize the strategic plan for this Committee. We will update SLP members from time to time on the progress made. We also encourage members to provide their feedback, suggestions and recommendations on how to further improve the process safety management system and safe work practices in chemical and process industries. You can do this through our Secretariat at secretariat@slp.org.sg.