

15 August 2023

To: All Contractors

Circular on Updates to Construction Work Permit Holder (WPH) Policies

1. The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) and the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will be adjusting Construction Work Permit Holder (WPH) policies, to facilitate the hiring of Rank-and-File occupations under work permit.

[From 1 September 2023] Hire Non-Traditional Sources (NTS)¹ and the People's Republic of China (PRC) Work Permit Holders (WPHs) as Full-Time Drivers

2. Under current rules, employers in the Construction sector are only allowed to hire NTS and PRC WPHs as part-time drivers (i.e. employed as a Worker-cum-driver²). Full-time NTS and PRC drivers today are allowed to be hired on S Passes.

3. To provide employers with more flexibility, **BCA and MOM will allow NTS and PRC WPHs to be full-time drivers in the Construction sector, subject to a list of permitted driver occupations.** From 1 September 2023 onwards, employers may submit a Work Permit application to convert existing S Pass holders to full-time WPH drivers, subject to prevailing WPH requirements. They may do so via the Work Permit Online (WPOL) e-Service. For existing WPHs in other occupations, employers may submit an occupation change request via the Data Amendment Module (DAM) in WPOL. With a valid work permit indicating a full-time driver occupation (e.g. Lorry Driver, Trailer-Truck Driver or Heavy Truck Driver), employers can apply for a Class 4 or 5 licence from the Traffic Police.

4. Please refer to Table 1 for the list of permitted driver occupations.

¹ Non-Traditional Source (NTS) refers to India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Philippines.

² For more information on designating driving as a secondary job function in the Construction, Process and Marine Shipyard (CMP) sectors, you may refer to: <https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-worker/sector-specific-rules/designate-driving-as-secondary-job-function>

Table 1: Driver Occupations and Vehicles Eligible for WPH as of 1 September 2023

Sources of Work Permit Holder	Before 1 September 2023	From 1 September 2023
Malaysia, North Asian Sources ³	<p><u>Part-time Driver</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Worker-cum-driver (only allowed to drive Class 3 vehicles such as cars or light goods vehicles) <p><u>Full-time Driver</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lorry/Truck Driver 	
Non-Traditional Sources, the People's Republic of China (PRC)	<p><u>Part-time Driver</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Worker-cum-driver (only allowed to drive Class 3 vehicles such as cars or light goods vehicles) 	<p><u>Part-time Driver</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Worker-cum-driver (only allowed to drive Class 3 vehicles such as cars or light goods vehicles) <p>[NEW] <u>Full-time Driver</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction Lorry Driver Construction Trailer-truck Driver Construction Heavy-truck Driver

5. ***NTS and PRC workers employed as full-time drivers must be paid a monthly fixed salary of at least \$1,600. Similar to today, the total number of worker-cum-drivers and full-time NTS and PRC WPH drivers cannot be more than 20% of the firm's total workforce⁴.*** These measures are meant to encourage employers to continue hiring higher-skilled workers, while enjoying the new flexibilities.

6. Employers should not employ full-time WPHs to drive other vehicles not listed within Table 1, for example, buses (of all class types) and Class 3 vehicles (except cars or light goods vehicle). Employers are also reminded that all drivers are required to meet all prevailing requirements, including holding a valid driving licence recognised by the Traffic Police.

³ North Asian Source refers to Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea, Taiwan.

⁴ Total workforce excludes Employment Pass (EP) holders.

[From 1 November 2023] Concession for Skills Evaluation Certification (Knowledge) [SEC(K)] Requirement for Existing S Pass Holders in Selected Rank-and-File Occupations who Wish to Convert to Work Permit Holders (WPHs)

7. Under current rules, prospective workers are required to obtain SEC(K) to be eligible as Basic-Skilled construction WPHs. These include S Pass holders in the Construction sector who have since converted to WPHs.

8. In recognition that S Pass holders possess a higher skillset, **BCA and MOM will provide a one-off concession for existing Construction S Pass holders employed in selected rank-and-file occupations (listed in Annex A) as at 31 August 2023**. Employers can convert these workers to Higher-Skilled R1 WPHs if they are paid a minimum fixed monthly salary of at least \$1,600⁵. Employers may submit the application to convert their S Pass holder to WPH via MOM Work Permit Online (WPOL) from 1 November 2023. Employers looking to convert their existing Construction S Pass holders employed in the selected rank-and-file occupations before 1 November 2023 can be considered on a case-by-case basis (see FAQ 3 for details).

9. These S Pass holders will be regarded as having obtained SEC(K) at a higher skill level. The higher skilled status will be valid for 2 years or till 31 October 2025, whichever is earlier. Thereafter, these WPHs must meet the prevailing R1 criteria to continue to be considered R1 WPHs.

Permissible Job roles for Construction Workers

10. WPHs employed as Construction Worker or Construction Worker-cum-Driver are to be deployed only in activities as set out in Fourth Schedule, Part V of the Employment of Foreign Manpower Regulations⁶. Construction workers are not allowed to be deployed in job roles including, but not limited to, accounting executives, cleaners and pest control workers. The agencies will not hesitate to take enforcement actions against errant employers.

⁵These workers will qualify for R1 under the Direct R1 pathway. Under the Direct R1 pathway, WPHs will need to be paid a minimum of \$1,600 and pass SEC(K) at a higher skill level. The latter requirement is waived for eligible workers.

⁶ Please refer to the following document for specified construction activities that the employer can allow foreign employees to perform: <https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/EFMA1990-S569-2012>

Pressing on with Productivity Efforts

11. The Government has announced in 2022 that the Construction Dependency Ratio Ceiling (DRC)⁷ will be reduced from 1:7 to 1:5 come 1 January 2024. This measure, together with the implemented moves on S-Pass sub-DRC⁸, qualifying salary and levies⁹, are part of the national drive to uplift productivity, improving employment outcomes for locals while reducing reliance on foreign manpower. Companies are encouraged to transform their business and workforce by making use of existing support programmes like the Productivity Solution Grant¹⁰ and Productivity Innovation Project¹¹. Employers are encouraged to upgrade and retrain their workers to keep up with the industry transformation efforts.

12. For clarifications, please contact BCA at www.bca.gov.sg/feedbackform/ or MOM at <https://service2.mom.gov.sg/efeedback/Forms/eFeedback.aspx>.

Building and Construction Authority
Ministry of Manpower

⁷ Please refer to the following link for construction sector's DRC changes as of 1 Jan 2024:

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/faq/work-permit-for-foreign-worker/what-are-the-upcoming-changes-for-the-construction-sector-from-jan-2024>

⁸ Please refer to the following link for S Pass sub-DRC changes as of 1 Jan 2023:

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/s-pass/quota-and-levy/levy-and-quota-requirements>

⁹ Please refer to the following link for changes to S Pass levies and qualifying salary as announced during COS 2022: <https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/s-pass/upcoming-changes-to-s-pass-eligibility>

¹⁰ Please refer to the following link for information on the Productivity Solution Grant:

<https://www1.bca.gov.sg/buildsg/buildsg-transformation-fund/productivity-solutions-grant>

¹¹ Please refer to the following link for information on the Productivity Innovation Project:

<https://www1.bca.gov.sg/buildsg/buildsg-transformation-fund/productivity-innovation-project>

Annex A – List of S Pass Occupations that will be Eligible for SEC(K) Waiver should Employee have a Valid S Pass as of 31 August 2023

S/N	Occupations	SSOC 2000
1	Supervisor and general foreman (Building trades)	71000
2	Other heavy truck drivers	83249
3	Supervisor and general foreman (Food processing, woodworking, textile, leather and related trades)	74000
4	Lorry driver	83241
5	Supervisor and general foreman (Metal, machinery and related trades)	72000
6	Carpenter	71141
7	Floor and wall tile setter	71112
8	Other labourers and related workers nec	93909
9	Trailer-truck driver	83242
10	Other machinery mechanics	72319
11	Welder	72131
12	Electrician	72413
13	Machine supervisor and general foreman	82000
14	Other wood products machine operators	82409
15	Other machine operators nec	82909
16	Plasterer	71150
17	Industrial and office machinery mechanic	72313
18	Stationary plant supervisor and general foreman	81000
19	Other lifting truck operators	83339
20	Other production craftsman and related workers nec	79009
21	Other painters and related workers	71189
22	Other railway brakemen and related workers	83129
23	Other electricians and electrical fitters and mechanics	72419
24	Reinforcing iron worker	71123
25	Other building trades workers nec	71199
26	Construction steel erector	72152
27	Other quality checkers and testers	82829
28	Electrical/Electronic products quality checker and tester	82821
29	Glazier	71170
30	Supervisor and general foreman (Precision, handicraft, printing and related trades)	73000
31	Other glass makers, cutters, grinders and finishers	73229
32	Other electrical line installers	72469
33	Other bricklayers, stonemasons and tile setters	71119
34	Plastic product machine operator	82320
35	Well driller and borer (except oil and gas wells)	81112
36	Other machine-tool setter-operators	82119
37	Other fibreglass makers and related plant operators nec	81399
38	Electronic equipment/component assembler	82812
39	Stone cutter and carver	79001
40	Wood furniture finisher	74223

FAQs

1. ***My firm is interested to hire NTS and PRC full-time driver, as listed in Table 1? How do we submit the application?***

From 1 September 2023 onwards, employers may submit an application via Work Permit Online (WPOL) and convert their existing S Pass holders or WPHs in other occupations to full-time drivers.

For existing S Pass holders, employers can apply for a new work permit with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) via WPOL and declare one of the occupations listed in Table 1. S Pass holders requiring the waiver of SEC(K) should only submit their applications from 1 November 2023 with the steps outlined in FAQ 3.

For existing WPHs, employers will need to submit a request to the MOM to change the worker's occupations to that listed in Table 1 via the Data Amendment Module (DAM) on WPOL. Should there be any changes to the worker's salary, employers are reminded to also update the salary information via Work Permit Online.

Firms will need to meet specific requirements for worker's source country or region, quota and levy. Please refer to MOM's website for details:

<https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-worker/sector-specific-rules/construction-sector-requirements>

Firms will also need to ensure that all employed drivers have the relevant licence class to drive the vehicle he /she is employed for. Please refer to Traffic Police's website for all driving licence-related matters:

<https://www.police.gov.sg/Advisories/Traffic/Traffic-Matters>

2. ***Can my firm employ new workers as full-time drivers listed in Table 1?***

Yes. At the same time, we encourage employers to retain experienced workers and reduce your reliance on foreign manpower.

3. My firm currently employs S Pass holders within the job roles as listed in Annex A and we are interested to convert our workers to a Work Permit Holder. How do we submit the application?

For existing S Pass holders, employers will need to apply for a new Work Permit with MOM via WPOL from 1 November 2023. The SEC(K) requirement will be waived for eligible S Pass holders in occupation listed in Annex A.

Prior to the Work Permit application, pre-approval needs to be sought from MOM's Work Pass Division (WPD) via the link "[MOM – Appeal for rejected or revoked Work Permit/IPA or request to proceed with a Work Permit application \(Construction & Process\) – FormSG](#)". Employers can only submit the Work Permit application after WPD has conveyed their approval. Employers are to note the following:

- Work Permit application is to be submitted via Work Permit Online (WPOL).
- During application, employer must select "Social Visit Pass (SVP)" as the endorsement type.
- Once Work Permit is approved, employer must cancel the S Pass before proceeding with the issuance of Work Permit.

For employers looking to convert their S Pass holders before 1 November 2023, they can contact BCA at bca_fwp@bca.gov.sg.

4. My firm currently employs S Pass holders within the job roles as listed in Annex A. Will these workers be eligible to convert to R1 WPHs?

Yes, these workers can qualify for R1 under the Direct R1 pathway if they earn a minimum fixed monthly salary of \$1,600. Under the Direct R1 pathway, WPHs will need to be paid a minimum fixed salary of \$1,600 and pass SEC(K) at a higher skill level. The latter requirement is waived for eligible workers with a valid S Pass as of 31 August 2023. Firms may also consider other pathways to upgrade workers to R1 WPHs. For more details, please refer to https://www1.bca.gov.sg/buildsg/manpower/bca-approved-training-and-testing-centres/coretrade_faqs/upgrading-pathways

5. Is the SEC(K) waiver applicable for S Pass holders with pass validity expiring before 31 August 2023 or S Pass holders hired after 31 Aug 2023?

The SEC(K) waiver is only for eligible S Pass holders in the identified trades employed as of 31 August 2023.

6. ***My employee has converted to WPH under this SEC(K) waiver policy adjustment. Will the employee be required to take SEC(K) for future work permit application after the employee leaves Singapore?***

No. S Pass holders eligible for the waiver as outlined in this circular will not be required to obtain the SEC(K) for subsequent work permit applications.

7. ***My firm currently employs an S Pass holder and is interested to convert the employee as a Work Permit Holder. Can the employee continue to stay in an HDB?***

SP holders that are converted to WPH are subjected to prevailing WPH housing requirements. If these workers are currently renting an HDB flat or bedroom, they are allowed to reside in the flat until the existing renting out approval from HDB expires. Thereafter, they will need to meet the prevailing WPH housing requirements. Please refer to MOM's website for further details, <https://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-permit-for-foreign-worker/housing/various-types-of-housing>.