

SP Group commits \$35m to upgrade skills of staff

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After attending a one-day course earlier this year, gas regulator technician Cham Tai Kieo found he and his colleagues could halve the travelling time needed to check and maintain some 400 gas overground boxes across the island.

The 37-year-old learnt how to assemble and read smart sensors, which energy utilities provider SP Group has started using to remotely monitor pressure in gas regulators.

With new technology shaking up the energy industry, Mr Cham's employer SP Group and the Union of Power and Gas Employees (Upage) have been collaborating since January last year to identify skills gaps and find suitable courses for workers, so that they can take on new or transformed jobs.

So far, about 2,800 SP Group staff have benefited.

The company said yesterday that it will now spend \$35 million over the next three years to upgrade the skills of all its 3,600 staff, working

with the union to prepare workers as the energy sector faces digitalisation and rising customer expectations.

This will be done via a company training committee set up by SP Group and the union, with the two organisations formalising their collaboration by signing an agreement.

National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) secretary-general Ng Chee Meng witnessed the signing yesterday at SP Group's headquarters near Kallang.

SP Group's committee is the third to be set up by Upage and energy companies in recent weeks, following similar agreements with YTL PowerSeraya and City Gas.

In a joint statement, SP Group and the union said workers will be able to further develop competencies in the areas of customer service, cyber security, data analytics, safety and skills for a digital workplace.

Upage general secretary Abdul Samad Abdul Wahab, who is a principal technical officer at SP Group, encouraged workers to go for training.

He said a number of those who had attended training sessions have seen their salaries rise by 8 per cent to 20 per cent

"Let's not be afraid to adapt, embrace and adopt the various technologies and use them in our daily jobs, just like we are in our daily lives," he said, speaking to about 200 company and union representatives at the signing event.

NTUC started setting up company training committees this year and aims to have 1,000 of them over three years. So far, over 60 have been set up across industries such as manufacturing, lifestyle and the public sector.

Group chief executive of SP Group Wong Kim Yin said that as new technology shakes up the energy industry, "we want to help our people adapt and prepare ahead of this potentially disruptive transformation".

Mr Cham said he used to have to install a chart recorder device and return the next day to pick it up for analysis. But with smart sensors, gas pressure can be monitored from the depot.

Mr Cham, who has been with SP



Mr Cham Tai Kieo, a gas regulator technician with SP Group, says his training has helped him increase productivity. ST PHOTO: KELLY HUI

Group for about six years, said he next hopes to learn how to read pressure charts that are generated by the sensors. It helps the team to pick up any abnormalities and try to fix them before customers' gas supply is affected.

"Using the sensors increases our productivity and helps us maintain reliability for customers, which can enhance my career," he said.

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