

EA Alert Dated: 23 February 2015

EA Alert: Do Not Keep Passport or Work Pass of Foreign Worker

We wish to remind you that your employment agency (EA) should not retain a foreign employee's passport beyond the timeframe that you require it to facilitate placement of the foreign employee, extend the validity of the passport or perform other official work. You should return the foreign employee's passport to him or her as soon as possible, for example once the work pass card has been collected. This is because the passport is a personal identifier that belongs to the foreign employee.

2 In some of the complaints received by MOM, EAs were found in possession of foreign employees' passports or work passes long after the workers were successfully employed. Some EAs failed to make arrangements to return the documents. Other EAs retained the documents as a form of collateral to minimise the risk of the employees leaving employment without notice. Regardless of the reason, an EA that retains a foreign employee's passport or work pass when it does not require it for official reasons breaches the conditions of its licence. Under the EA Act, an EA may be fined up to S\$5,000 and/or be jailed for up to 6 months. [1] The Commissioner for Employment Agencies may also impose Demerit Points and other administrative measures.

3 MOM will continue to share important EA-related information with all EAs through this channel. Please keep your EA's email address updated. For further clarification, you may call 6692 4352 or email MOM\_FMMD@mom.gov.sg.

Yours sincerely

Brian Wong

Senior Assistant Director, Foreign Manpower Management Division, Ministry of Manpower  
Assistant Commissioner for Employment Agencies

[1] Section 23 (5) EAA - Any licensee who contravenes any of the conditions of the licence shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both.