



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Authorities Shocked by Number of Drugged Drivers

By Danny Rose

July 14 2005

Road safety authorities are shocked by the early result of Victoria's random roadside drug testing after one in 50 drivers tested positive for illegal drug use.

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon said today she was surprised by the outcome of the first six months of the year-long trial.

More than 7,000 drivers were tested from mid-December last year to the end of June, with 145 testing positive for methamphetamines, cannabis, or both.

The strike rate of one in 50 compares to one in 250 drivers typically caught for drink driving by random roadside breathalyser tests.

In another alarming statistic, 34 of the drugged drivers were behind the wheel of large trucks involved in the heavy transport industry.

"Even the experts didn't quite predict that there would be this many people who drive with drugs in their system," Ms Nixon said.

"Victoria has a serious problem of people who drive with drugs in their system."

Ms Nixon said drug users often claimed their driving was not impaired but they were wrong.

She said the early trial result had strengthened the case for further random roadside drug testing in Victoria.

Other statistics released at the Royal Automobile Club Victoria (RACV) traffic enforcement forum, in Melbourne today, included:

- of the 7,207 motorists tested, 5,054 were driving cars with 2,153 in trucks.
- 111 car drivers found to be under the influence of drugs (one in 45) and 34 truck drivers (one in 63).
- drugged car drivers ranged in age from 18 to 54 years, but the vast majority (68 per cent) were in their 20s.
- drugged truck drivers were aged 26 to 51, and 59 per cent were in their 30s.
- more drivers tested positive for methamphetamine (also known as ecstasy) than cannabis, but this was attributed to a more advanced testing system for methamphetamine.

Inspector Ian Cairns, in charge of the trial, said officers had targeted some drivers who were leaving dance or "rave" parties, but he said the results were indicative of a broader community trend.

"It was random, conducted seven days a week ... and very disturbing from a road safety point of view," he said.

The results suggested drink driving programs may be having an effect, Insp Cairns said.

"There are less people drink driving now than there were 10 to 15 years ago, however, the evidence also shows people using illicit drugs has increased, especially over the past four or five years," he said.

"(And) the incidence of people using illicit drugs and driving has increased."

The penalty for a first offence for drugged driving is three license demerit points and a \$307 fine.

AAP

New WorkCover Farm Safety Starter Guide

18 July 2005

NSW Commerce Minister, John Della Bosca, today announced the release of WorkCover's Farm Safety Starter Guide to support National Farm Safety Week.

"This guide will assist farmers to identify, assess and control risks on their property in a simple, easy-to-use way," the Minister said.

"Safety is a priority in any workplace, and a working farm is no different.

"This publication will provide farmers with the tools necessary to map hazards; identify potential dangers for their workers and family; store and use chemicals safely, and control the risks unique to their industry.

"Rural industries have the second highest incidence of injuries and fatalities, after mining," Mr Della Bosca said.

"In the five years to June 2003 in NSW, there were more than 7,500 serious injuries in the sector and 1,800 of them resulted in permanent disability.

"There were 23 workplace fatalities in agriculture and services to agriculture.

"Initiatives like the Farm Safety Starter Guide provide free, simple and practical assistance

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to farmers to improve the safety of their workplace and their home.”

The Farm Safety Starter Guide was one of the recommendations of the inaugural NSW Workplace Safety Summit, which brought together over 200 representatives from business, unions and the community to focus on safer workplaces.

The guide has been developed in consultation with a range of employer and worker associations from rural industries and will be incorporated in a new Farm Safety Kit to be released later this year.

“NSW occupational health and safety laws require reasonable action from all people who have an obligation,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“The legislation says that if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate a risk, the employer must control the risk.

“There are defences to prosecution and the Act acknowledges that employers cannot be expected to make provision for things beyond their control.

“The vast majority of NSW employers have been successfully complying with risk management based workplace safety legislation since 1983,” Mr Della Bosca said.

“While WorkCover prosecutes when necessary, employers are 20 times more likely to get written advice from WorkCover than be prosecuted,” said the Minister.

“Farming has its own particular risks and hazards, and as part of WorkCover’s commitment to working with the industry to make workplaces safer, this guide addresses those unique issues.

“The Farm Safety Starter Guide is free, simple and practical assistance to farmers to improve the safety of their workplace and their home.

“It is a hands-on approach that shows farmers how to address safety issues on their farm, track the progress of improvements and develop controls for the identified hazards.

“Farm Safety Week is an important annual event that highlights the risks inherent in farming and I am sure the guide will be welcomed by rural employers,” Mr Della Bosca said.

The Farm Safety Starter Guide is available through WorkCover’s Publications Hotline on 1300 799 003 or on the website, www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Source: Mister for Workcover

Using a mobile phone when driving quadruples crash risk and hands-free devices are no safer

July 12 2005

People who use a mobile (cell) phone when driving are four times more likely to have a serious crash and hands-free devices are no safer, concludes new research published online by the British Medical Journal (BMJ) today.

The study took place in Perth, Western Australia, and involved 456 drivers aged 17 and over who owned or used mobile phones and had been involved in road crashes requiring hospital attendance between April 2002 and July 2004. Since July 2001, it has been illegal to use a hand held phone when driving in Western Australia.

Using phone company records, the researchers assessed phone use immediately before a crash (hazard interval) and on trips at the same time of day 24 hours, 72 hours, and 7 days before the crash (control interval). Drivers were interviewed in hospital and were included in the analyses if they verified driving during at least one control interval.

About one third of calls during the hazard interval and one third of calls during control intervals were placed on hand held phones.

Mobile phone use in the 10 minutes before a crash was associated with a four-fold increased likelihood of crashing. Similar results were found for the interval up to 5 minutes before a crash. Risk was raised irrespective of sex, age group, or whether or not a hands-free device was used.

More and more new vehicles are being equipped with hands-free phone technology. Although this may lead to fewer hand held phones used while driving in the future, our research indicates that this may not eliminate the risk, warn the authors. Indeed, if this new technology increases mobile phone use in cars, it could contribute to even more crashes.

At least in the short term, it seems likely that mobile phone use in cars will continue to grow, despite the growing evidence of the risks it creates, they state.

The next research step would be to assess whether certain types of hands-free devices, such as car kits or voice activated units, might be safer than others.

Source: British Medical Journal

NT gov’t to prosecute ERA over injury to contractor

By Alex Wilson

July 11 2005

Energy Resources of Australia Ltd (ERA) is to be prosecuted by the Northern Territory government over an injury suffered by one of its contractors.

The NT Department of Business Industry and Resource Development (DBIRD) today filed charges against the uranium miner in the Darwin Magistrate’s court.

DBIRD said the charges related to the company’s “alleged failure to minimise risk to the safety and health of workers on the site” which was alleged to have caused a serious injury to a worker.

DBIRD chief executive Mike Burgess said the department regarded the breach of the Mining Management Act as a serious matter.

“This carries a minimum penalty of \$27,500 and a maximum fine of \$275,000,” he said.

DBIRD said the charges related to the serious injury of a fitter and turner, but said it would not make any further comment on the details of the incident until the magistrate hearing the case had made a decision.

ERA said it had been told it would be prosecuted by DBIRD under Section 23 (4) of the territory’s Mining Management Act.

The miner said the charges related to an incident at the processing plant of their Ranger mine in July 2004 when a contractor was injured.

AAP

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UPCOMING EVENTS

**Visions 2005 Conference,
Cairns International, Queensland
28-30 September 2005**

More information at
<http://www.sia.org.au/publications/Conferences/Safety%20in%20Action%202005/Visions%202005%20Conference.pdf>

**The Safety Conference,
Sydney NSW
26-28 October 2005**

More Information at:
<http://www.thesafetyshow.com/?view=conference>

This SIA Safety At Work Bulletin is circulated to all SIA members around Australia every week so if you have a special local SIA event, send the details through to the Editor at natadmin@sia.org.au for possible inclusion in this bulletin. This is a bulletin produced on behalf of the SIA and the more SIA content it contains the better it serves the members needs.

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Retail Audit Highlights Compliance Issues

July 7 2005

One in three retailers inspected by ACT WorkCover failed to fully comply with the Workers Compensation Act 1951 (the ACT). ACT WorkCover Inspectors visited 636 retail businesses in February 2005 in the biggest workers compensation compliance audit ever run by ACT WorkCover. Follow up investigations in relation to the audit have now been completed.

"The retail industry has the largest number of workers compensation claims and accounts for the largest claim costs of all industries in the ACT private sector," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

The audit included an inspection of all retail outlets in the four major shopping centres in the ACT; Westfield Belconnen, Canberra Centre, Tuggeranong Hyperdome and Woden Plaza, together employing over 8500 retail workers – over 40% of the total ACT retail workforce.

"Many retailers did not provide adequate information on workers compensation to their employees, a number did not have injury registers for their staff and a small number had no workers compensation insurance policy at all," Mr Janssen said.

A total of 254 compliance notices were issued including 41 infringement notices, 125 notices to produce additional information and 88 employer obligation forms.

"Seventeen of the 41 infringement notices were issued to clothing and soft good retailers – many part of national chains - which made up about a third of the stores visited and employed over 1300 workers," Mr Janssen said.

The lowest levels of compliance were found at Westfield Belconnen, the first centre audited, the highest at Woden Plaza, and retailer compliance improved between centres as Inspectors visited the other centres during the month of the audit.

"Smaller businesses had the lowest rates of compliance while the biggest department stores fully met Workers Compensation information and policy requirements," Mr Janssen said.

The audit was preceded by presentations, letters and advice to retailers to ensure they understood their Workers Compensation obligations.

"The audit aimed to improve retailers' understanding of their Workers Compensation obligations and further audits programmed for the coming year should show an improvement," Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT Workcover

Andrews announces tightening of building code compliance

July 13 2005

The federal government is to toughen up its construction code of practice, forcing all contractors who want commonwealth work to sign up to it.

It wants them signed up to the code before they can tender for commonwealth jobs.

The code covers a range of safety, industrial relations and standards requirements.

Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews said today many contractors currently did not sign until they knew they had won the tender.

He said the changes, which must be legislated, followed a review of the government's implementation guidelines which underpin the national code of practice for the construction industry.

"As a result of this review, a number of changes will be made to the guidelines to reinforce the government's commitment to reform the building and construction industry and maintain the momentum of reform in this crucial industry," Mr Andrews told a building conference in Melbourne.

He said the changes came out of a Cole royal commission recommendation and were built on the success of the code and guidelines over the past two years.

Mr Andrews said with the construction industry employing more than 700,000 workers and now a significant component of the Australian economy, a more productive, safe and law-abiding industry would benefit all Australians.

"These measures, together with the establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission, will help ensure that employers and unions in the building industry comply with the law, and that inefficient and lawless practices are removed from the industry", Mr Andrews said in a later statement.

But the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) said the changes were a sign of a further crackdown on construction workers' rights.

"What the minister is saying in fact is that he will use taxpayers' money to pressure employers to take away rights from building workers," CFMEU construction division secretary John Sutton said.

AAP

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ACT WorkCover Launches Education Campaign

July 12 2005

ACT WorkCover officially released a range of new educational resources today at the launch of its 2005 "Education and Awareness Campaign" attended by representatives of major industry organisations, unions and government agencies in the ACT.

"Businesses will now have access to a wider range of information and guidance material to assist them in understanding their obligations and in providing a safe working environment," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

A series of workplace audit and inspection programmes over the past six months has revealed a number of significant safety issues, highlighting the need for high quality safety information.

"While ACT WorkCover continues with its rigorous industry safety audit and compliance campaigns, the data collected through these audits is being systematically analysed to identify education and information needs," Mr Janssen said.

A new publication, A Guide to Forklift Safety, was developed following an audit that revealed a disturbing lack of compliance with safety regulations by businesses operating forklifts. A Forklift Safety Pre-operational Checklist - a magnet readily attached to forklifts for use by operators daily, was also launched.

"A Safety Checklist for New Businesses has also been developed following consultation with key industry associations and businesses in the ACT," Mr Janssen said.

One of the major new educational initiatives is the release of a mini compact disc that contains a comprehensive collection of ACT WorkCover publications and resources.

"The mini CD offers businesses a comprehensive toolkit of checklists, guidance notes, Codes of Practice, licensing information, application and reporting forms as well as legislation - a one stop shop on safety for businesses," Mr Janssen said.

Several new "plain English" legislation guides have also been produced, including a Guide to Occupational Health & Safety, a Guide to Dangerous Substances, a Guide for Consumer Fireworks and a Guide for Fireworks Displays in the ACT.

"We have also produced a Training Logbook for Users and Operators of Industrial Equipment, a Safety Handbook for the ACT Building & Construction Industry and upgraded the Small Business Toolkit," Mr Janssen said.

The new publications and resources are available for free from ACT WorkCover on 6205 0200. Source: ACT Workcover

Trucking company fined over death

July 14 2005

A Brisbane-based transport company has been fined \$40,000 over the death of a motorist who was struck when a mobile crane fell off the back of one of its trucks.

Truck Glean Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Brisbane Industrial Magistrates Court on Monday to breaching the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995.

Andrew John Print, the company director, also pleaded guilty.

The court heard that on June 6, 2001, a 23 tonne mobile crane dislodged from one of the company's low loaders as it was being driven southbound on the Gateway Arterial Road at Nudgee, in Brisbane's north.

The crane crashed through a concrete barrier and smashed into a northbound vehicle.

The woman driver died five days later from her injuries.

An investigation by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland found the crane dislodged because of inadequate lashing restraint chains, which were calculated to have been 312 per cent overloaded.

It also found the 10mm chains used on the company's low loaders did not comply with recommendations.

The court heard Print had fully cooperated with the investigation and had expressed deep remorse over the incident.

The company has since changed its load restraint system, improved supervision of its drivers and documented its loading processes.

No conviction was recorded. AAP

Australia's First Federal Safety Commissioner

July 13 2005

In a conference presentation in Melbourne this morning, Kevin Andrews, the Federal Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations announced the appointment of Australia's new Federal Safety Commissioner, Tom Fisher.

This is what the Minister said at the conference:

"The final reform commitment I would like to touch on this morning is the commitment to ensuring that Australian workplaces are safe.

This is an industry that suffers from significant occupational health and safety problems and the Australian Government is committed to improving safety in its capacity as a model client.

One objective of the 2003 BCII Bill was to ensure that successful tenderers for federally funded work are exemplars of occupational health and safety best practice.

In June 2004 I announced that the Federal Safety Commissioner would be established administratively. It commenced operations as an administrative unit of the Department in January 2005 and Mr Tom Fisher was recently appointed the Federal Safety Commissioner.

Mr Fisher was acting Chief Executive Officer of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) until his appointment. Prior to that appointment Mr Fisher was the Deputy CEO of NOHSC and previously was the Head of the Office of Small Business.

Mr Fisher will oversee the development of an OHS accreditation scheme for Australian Government construction

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projects and will consult widely with other Australian Government stakeholders, States and Territories, key industry representatives and companies to take forward the Government's OHS reform agenda for the construction industry.

The Department is consulting with industry prior to the implementation of the Government's proposed OHS accreditation scheme.

The scheme will not seek to set a higher benchmark for the industry in terms of OHS. Rather, the aim of the scheme will be to put in place an evolving arrangement that will seek to use Australian Government construction sites as models of best practice and, in the longer term, influence the behaviour of the broader industry."

Refinery shutdown to drive petrol prices to record highs:report

July 14 2005

Power is unlikely to return to Australia's second largest oil refinery with repairs expected to continue well into the weekend, a spokeswoman said tonight.

Power at the Caltex oil refinery in the Sydney suburb of Kurnell, which supplies the bulk of the city's petrol, was cut when a steel electricity tower folded over bringing down transmission lines.

The power failure, which occurred during maintenance work by EnergyAustralia on Tuesday night, may force the refinery to remain closed until the weekend.

"It's not yet possible to say when the work will be complete but we're flagging that it may continue into the weekend," EnergyAustralia spokeswoman Sandy Olsen said.

"The reason is we've got a range of safety issues that we're dealing with on site it is complex work and we need to proceed carefully."

Caltex declined to comment further on the situation.

AAP

New kit to help prevent falls

14 July 2005

Among older Australians, falls are a serious public health problem, causing about 1,000 deaths each year and hospitalisation for a further 55,000. Falls prevention is an Australian Government priority.

A new Australian Government-funded project to help older Australians from culturally diverse communities to avoid injuries caused by falls features a number of simple solutions and useful tips.

The Federal Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop, will launch the project at a special function in West Perth tomorrow. The Australian Government is providing \$196,800 to the Injury Control Council of WA to work with the Ethnic Communities Council of WA to develop a Falls Prevention Video Presentation Kit in Italian, Greek, German, Polish and Cantonese.

"Over the next decade people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities will make up almost a quarter of the population aged 65 and over in Australia," Ms Bishop said.

"That is why the Australian Government is providing funding for projects now to help ensure older people from different communities receive care and support that meets their individual cultural and language needs.

"Falls are a particular cause of pain and misery for older people. This kit will offer simple measures and precautions and includes the important message that falls are not an inevitable part of the ageing process - they can be prevented."

The project will include the development of a kit to include a standardised presentation session plan, a 15-minute video, and three checklists: How safe are you from falling? Are your shoes safe? and Your Home Safety. Community organisations will be able to use the kit to hold information sessions as well as making the video available to individuals. Copies of the kit in each language will be available free of charge for community groups around Australia.

The video will contain information about risk factors for falls by older people, including:

- environmental falls risk hazards especially in the home;
- medications that increase an individual's risk of falling;
- foot problems that increase an individual's risk of falling; and
- impaired balance and gait.

The project is part of the Australian Government's \$18.5 million National Falls Prevention for Older People Initiative.

Source: Minister for Ageing