



## Company Receives Heavy Penalty After Molten Metal Explosion

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### SIA Office Closure

Please note that the SIA National Office will be closed from the 26/12/05 and re-open 12/1/2006.

MERRY  
CHRISTMAS AND  
A HAPPY NEW  
YEAR  
from  
SIA SAFETY AT  
WORK BULLETIN

19 December 2005

Failing to address known safety hazards has cost a company a conviction and nearly \$260,000\* and a family years of pain and suffering after a man was badly burnt at a Keon Park foundry in June last year.

WorkSafe told Magistrate Ross Betts the man received burns to 30% of his body when molten metal in a furnace exploded and engulfed him. Most of the injuries were to his face and upper body. He survived, but has no memory of the incident.

Nonferral Pty Ltd today pleaded guilty to four charges laid under the Occupational Health and Safety Act in relation to incidents and WorkSafe visits between 24 June last year and February this year.

Outside the court, WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said the case was one of the worst the health and safety regulator has had to deal with. "At this workplace there was a high risk of injury or death. There was no preventative maintenance, only reactive or 'breakdown' maintenance. There were no safety meetings with staff where safety issues could be identified and solutions developed. The lesson from this case is that failing to meet occupational health and safety obligations carries serious consequences. If you don't understand and control the risks inherent with your business, WorkSafe will uphold the law."

Magistrate Betts was told it was well-known in the smelting industry that raw materials and furnace tools must be totally dry to avoid an explosion. Superheated moisture can expand rapidly, causing an eruption of whatever material it is in.

Industry standards require that raw materials and furnace tools must be preheated for 20 minutes before being immersed in the molten metal.

WorkSafe's investigation of the June 2004 incident found there was moisture on the graphite tool used in the furnace. Graphite tools were used because conventional steel tools would melt in the 1050 degree centigrade furnace. The investigation found the foundry building's roof leaked allowing water to enter the box where tools were stored. Investigators were told management had been told of the roof leaks for five years before the explosion.

In another incident in November last year, another man was burned about the neck face and head when moisture from a used ice pack reacted violently with the molten metal.

Investigating that case, WorkSafe found that despite the June incident, Nonferral had not prohibited the use of water in the aluminium casting areas and that people working near the molten metal were provided with water and cans of soft drink.

During visits by WorkSafe inspectors in February this year, they found tools standing in pools of water from the leaking roof.

Aluminium scrap which was to be melted-down was found to be wet from rain coming off the roof on February 2. Returning six days later, inspectors found water contamination of the scrap metal had still not been controlled.

\*Nonferral Pty Ltd was convicted and fined a total of \$240,000 and ordered to pay WorkSafe's costs of \$18,701. The company is not currently operating from its premises in Dunstons Court Keon Park.

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

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# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page

## Cook charged with stabbing co-worker

December 20 2005

A man has been charged with stabbing a co-worker at a restaurant in Sydney's inner west.

Police say an argument broke out in the kitchen between the two men, both cooks at a Vietnamese restaurant on Illawarra Road, Marrickville, about 7pm (AEDT).

One of the men, 22, was allegedly stabbed in the arm and taken to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital for treatment.

Investigators arrested a 45-year-old man at a nearby medical centre.

He was later charged with malicious wounding with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm and is due to appear in Newtown Local Court later today. AAP

## NSW Govt's plan to cut workplace injuries

December 19 2005

The NSW government is planning a three year strategy to improve health and safety in the workplace focusing on the prevention of manual handling injuries.

NSW Industrial Relations Minister John Della Bosca said today the safety campaign was in response to the recommendations of the 2005 NSW Workplace Safety Summit held in August at Orange.

He said manual handling injuries accounted for 24 per cent of all workers compensation claims and were often caused by lifting, pulling, pushing, bending, reaching and other physical activities.

"Each year manual handling injuries result in employees being unfit for work for more than 84,000 weeks and cost the workers compensation scheme more than \$244 million," Mr Della Bosca said in a statement.

The safety campaign will include a public awareness program and the development of guides to assist industry identify and eliminate manual handling hazards. AAP

## Ambulance head says attacks on ambulance disgraceful

December 12 2005

The head of the NSW Ambulance Service says the attack on an ambulance crew by rioters in Cronulla was disgraceful.

A male and a female officer were transporting six patients from the riot when they and their police escort were attacked by an aggressive crowd targeting people of Middle Eastern descent.

The female officer was hit on the head with a beer bottle which shattered the ambulance's sky light while her male colleague was cut by broken glass.

Their patients, including a woman who had been assaulted by the mob, escaped further injury in the attack.

Chief executive of the NSW Ambulance Service, Greg Rochford,

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## SAFETY IN AUSTRALIA

The next edition of SIA's SAFETY IN AUSTRALIA journal should be with you this week. It includes articles on

Industrial manslaughter: Is it time for legislation in all Australian jurisdictions? By Paul Breslin

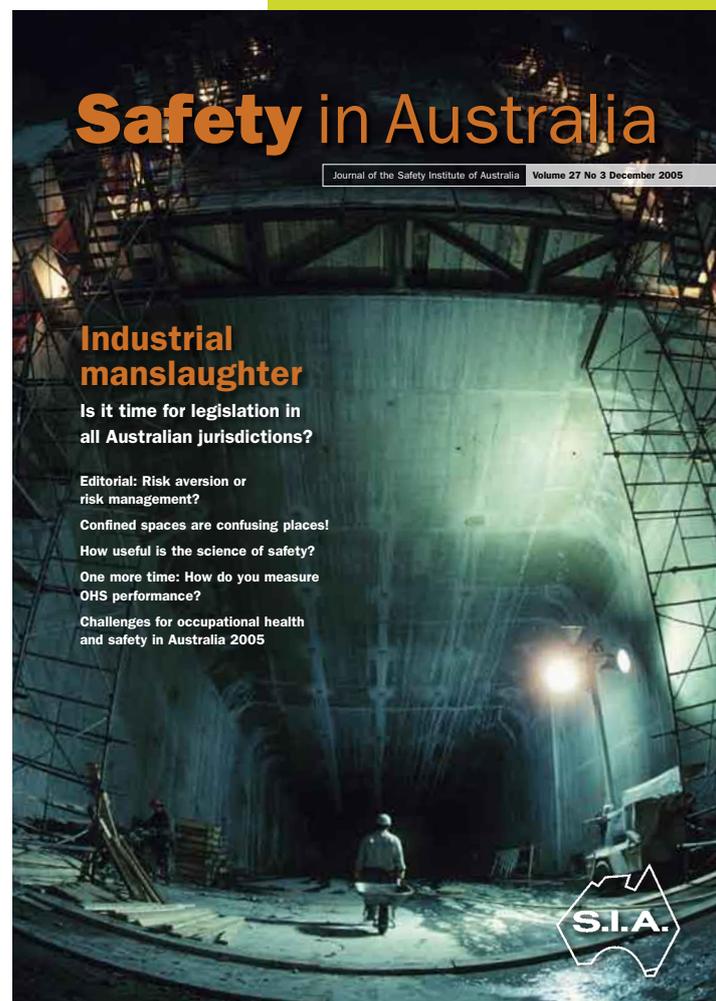
Confined spaces are confusing places! By Kerry Smith

How useful is the science of safety? By Kevin Jones

One more time: How do you measure OHS performance? By Leo Ruschena

Challenges for occupational health and safety in Australia 2005 By George Robotham

30 ways to improve OHS By Dr Chris Winder





Continued from page

said the two officers were “shaken by their ordeal” but were back at work.

“They’re clearly shaken. It was a frightening experience for them,” he said.

“It really is unfortunate that ambulance officers who are just out there doing their job in the service of the community, trying to help people, protect people, save lives, get interfered with in the course of their duties.”

Mr Rochford said the officers had acted “very bravely” in the face of “quite disgraceful behaviour”.

He said the ambulance service was working closely with police in case of further outbreaks of violence and said while ambulance officers would not be exposed to unnecessary risk, they would still be responding to emergencies.

“Ambulance officers are just out there to care for anyone who gets sick or injured no matter what group or branch or religion or colour they come from and we will continue to do that work we just ask for the community to respect that,” Mr Rochford said.

AAP

## ICAC recommends 18 be charged over certificate fraud

December 14 2005

The NSW corruption watchdog has recommended criminal charges against 18 people found to have been involved in a statewide fraud ring that falsified thousands of builders’ licences.

The Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) today handed down its report into licensing fraud by WorkCover NSW officers who issued false certificates of competency and “substantially undermined safety on construction sites”.

The watchdog found 23 people involved in the ring acted corruptly and recommended the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) lay charges against 18.

This includes two former WorkCover officers and 16 people who passed on the certificates.

The investigation uncovered a network of distributors and hundreds of workers who obtained false certificates, with witnesses describing how demand for the false certificates spread through word-of-mouth at pubs and on construction sites.

The ICAC has made 19 recommendations to WorkCover to address the “multiple systemic corruption risks” within the organisation.

The watchdog identified a number of deficiencies, including sharing of log-on details and passwords, lack of supervision and controls in approving and printing certificates of competency.

The report found the thousands of false certificates had the potential to cause “enormous damage to workers, to the projects they were working on, and to the general public, and that such activity substantially undermined safety regulations on construction sites”.

The investigation into false certificates was launched on June 2004 following anomalies identified in a WorkCover audit.

AAP

## Man dies inside grain silo

December 13 2005

The death of a man inside a grain silo is being investigated by workplace safety authorities.

The man is believed to have suffocated after falling into the silo, at Long Plains, north of Adelaide, yesterday.

Police believe the man, who was wearing a harness and rope inside the silo, may have slipped and been pulled under the barley as it was moving.

About 100 tonnes of barley was pumped out of the silo in a frantic effort to rescue the man, who was an employee of the Australian Barley Board. His body was discovered at the bottom of the silo four hours later.

Inspectors from SafeWork SA visited the site today as part of their inquiries into the incident. A SafeWork SA spokesman said it was unclear how long the investigation would take.

AAP

## Clarification

In relation to the article “Man Killed By Collapsing Trench” in last week’s edition, the Caboolture Shire Council wishes to make it clear that the Council “had nothing to do with the incident and this was a private organisation undertaking private work.”

The error was in the story provided by AAP Newsplus. We apologise for any offence or confusion that this AAP article provided.

The Editor

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# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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## CFMEU calls for WorkCover overhaul

December 15 2005

The Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) wants the NSW government to overhaul WorkCover to prevent the blackmarket trade in bogus building licences.

The call came after an Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) inquiry recommendation yesterday that criminal charges be laid against 18 people involved in a statewide fraud ring which falsified thousands of builders' licences.

CFMEU NSW secretary Andrew Ferguson today welcomed the findings, calling on the government to adopt 19 recommendations from the ICAC to address systemic corruption risks within WorkCover.

"This is an issue the CFMEU has raised for several years and we hope that the ICAC report will be the impetus needed to create a system that prevents these kinds of fraud," Mr Ferguson said in a statement. "It is essential action is taken to create a system of work that prevents this from occurring again."

The report identified a number of deficiencies at WorkCover, including the sharing of log-on details and passwords, lack of supervision and controls in approving and printing certificates of competency.

"This report was a thorough and timely investigation into a very serious issue ... that was putting the lives of thousands of workers, and community members, at risk," Mr Ferguson said. "The ICAC should be congratulated for exposing those responsible and recommending the prosecutions of 18 individuals. But we also need to be vigilant to make sure this does not occur again, because every person who enters a building site with fraudulent qualifications is putting the lives of fellow workers and passers-by at risk."

AAP

## Working at height dangers highlighted in building demolition case

14 December 2005

Victoria's construction and demolition has been warned to provide safe working conditions after a worker was spotted working eight metres above ground without fall protection.

The Director of WorkSafe's construction division, Geoff Thomas, said the alarming incident could have led to tragedy.

"Falls from height are a major cause of death or serious injury in Victoria. The purpose of fall protection is to prevent people dying or spending their life with a permanent head injury or in a wheelchair."

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## Man critical after grinder accident

December 12 2005

A Brisbane man is in a serious condition after slicing his leg with an angle grinder on the Gold Coast.

The 30-year-old was working on a construction site in Beechmont, in the Gold Coast hinterland, when the accident occurred about 2pm (AEST), a RACQ Careflight spokeswoman said.

She said the man had suffered massive blood loss and was being flown to Gold Coast Hospital. AAP

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# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Bendigo Magistrate William Gibb said an employee of Bendigo Scaffolding was working in a perilous position and that employers had a duty to ensure sites under their control were managed in a safe way.

The company pleaded guilty last week to one charge\* laid under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1985). It was convicted and fined \$14,000.

WorkSafe told the court an inspector saw two men working on a Bendigo building that was being demolished on 14 October 2004. They were working within two metres from the edge of the building without any safety mesh under the roof or other fall protection while removing and carrying steel roof sheets eight metres long.

Access to the roof was via a broken extension ladder that was not secured at the top or bottom. The employees used the ladder while carrying tools, and could therefore not keep two hands on the ladder at all times. The company had harnesses, scaffolding and a ladder that were located off site at headquarters while a Bendigo Scaffolding manager had visited the site on at least two occasions.

There was no written Job Safety Analysis undertaken for the work nor did one of the employees understand that he would be the supervisor for the work.

When the company which commissioned Bendigo Scaffolding was notified of the alleged safety breaches it terminated its contract and engaged another firm to continue with the demolition work safely.

An elevated work platform and a crane were brought in to remove the roofing iron from the roof and to carry it to the ground.

Mr Thomas said the case served as an example to the construction industry of the need to ensure high standards of safety were applied. "Although no one was hurt in this case, it was more a case of good luck rather than good management. The dangers were apparent and well-understood by the industry at large. It's a concern that such dangerous work practices were being used.

"This company has paid a significant penalty in terms of legal costs, fines and loss of the job. What the industry must understand is that these costs can easily be avoided if workplace health and safety laws are followed."

Source: WorkSafe

## Adobe Acrobat V7 Information

Some readers have expressed difficulty in upgrading to the latest version of Acrobat Reader with one of the problems being that the download can be over 25 megabytes - a substantial burden to dial-up internet connections.

Safety At Work publishers are now allowed to distribute the latest edition of Acrobat Reader on a CD. If you want a copy of Acrobat Reader 7.00 please email me at [jonesk@sia.org.au](mailto:jonesk@sia.org.au) and include your full postal address. A CD will be mailed to you shortly after.

The CD won't be pretty as it is a burnt copy of the software that Adobe permits us to distribute. It is not allowed to be given to anyone other than the person requesting the CD and all CDs will be checked for viruses before distribution.

## From the Editor

Thank you for supporting and warmly receiving our first year of providing you with a contemporary safety news bulletin. Thanks to all those SIA members who emailed suggestions and criticisms.

I would be interested in your comments on this revised format. It has been many months coming and we will continue to refine the format in line with SIA member requirements and the technological capacity of members.

Please have a safe Christmas and we will keep you informed in the new year.

Kevin Jones, Editor

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