



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Workplace Causes 5000 cases of Cancer A Year

SYDNEY, June 13 2006

Almost 5000 Australians a year develop cancer from their workplace raising fears occupational health and safety regulations are failing workers.

A study by the Queensland Cancer Fund and the University of Sydney found twice as many people as previously thought are exposed to cancer-causing substances while at work. This accounts for 11 per cent of cancers in men and 2 per cent of cancers in women, The Australian newspaper reports.

Former president of the Australian Lawyers Alliance Tom Goudkamp said workplaces could become vulnerable to pay compensation if workers are exposed to carcinogens. "If people are getting sick or becoming very sick because of something that happens at work that is preventable, then clearly they or their family would be entitled to compensation," Mr Goudkamp told The Australian.

The study found 30 per cent of lung cancer cases in Australia each year occurred from exposure to asbestos, fumes and passive smoking in the workplace. About 300 cases of bladder cancer were caused by exposure to dyes, lead and solvents at work, while 265 cases of colon cancer were linked to metal work and asbestos.

AAP

Qld to beef up security industry standards

BRISBANE, June 7 2006

The Queensland government is moving to beef up standards in the security industry following the recent death of a pub patron in Brisbane.

Three bouncers are facing murder charges after William Armando Amaya, 25, was ejected from the Royal Exchange Hotel at Toowong, in Brisbane's inner west, and collapsed on the footpath late last month.

Mr Amaya's death sparked calls for a review of the security industry, including better screening of guards by their employers.

Fair Trading Minister Margaret Keech told parliament today a package of reforms to boost standards in the industry was nearing completion. The reforms, including a code of conduct, would help eradicate thuggery in the industry, Ms Keech said.

"Our model will include strict industry probity checks so we can weed out the thugs - before they start work," she said. "There will be tougher penalties for those operating without a licence and those who employ them. We will have no hesitation cancelling or suspending the licence of persons who are no longer appropriate to remain in the industry, and we will beef up our compliance resources and operations across the state."

Ms Keech said staff would have to operate under a code of conduct, with training requirements strengthened and licences conditional upon ongoing training.

Licensing will also be expanded to include anyone doing security work, including in-house personnel, dog handlers, electronic surveillance installers and operators and security advisers. A scheme of trainee licences would also be introduced under the proposed amendments to the Security Providers Act and Liquor Act.

Ms Keech said liquor licensees also would be made more accountable for the actions of bouncers, who will have to undergo alcohol training, while ratios governing the number of bouncers to crowd numbers would also be introduced.

AAP

Tighter restrictions for explosives sales now in place

June 8 2006

Queensland is now the first Australian state or territory to require all purchases of explosives to be reported to authorities.

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Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water Henry Palaszczuk said new regulations that tightened the restrictions on the sale of explosives were now in force.

"The new regulations have been put in place following the recent allegation of an unauthorised purchase of explosives by a Brisbane man," Mr Palaszczuk said. "Previously, buyers, sellers and users of explosives in Queensland had to be licensed and comply with ASIO and other checks. These restrictions still apply but the Government has added extra requirements in light of the recent alleged activities."

The new restrictions introduced by the Queensland Government include:

- All new buyers of explosives must have their identity, contact details and their authority to purchase validated by the seller with the explosives regulator prior to the sale of explosives
- All buyers must provide information regarding the purpose for which they propose to use the explosives to the seller prior to purchase
- Sellers must report any unusual or suspect attempts to purchase explosives to the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water (NRMW)
- All sellers must report all sales of explosives to NRMW on a monthly basis and the department will examine these records to ensure that sellers are complying with the new regulations and that there are no inconsistencies
- All sellers must have an auditable system in place to ensure the traceability of explosives sold to ensure delivery occurs to the person to whom the explosives were sold.

The new Explosives Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006 replaces the directive issued by the Government's Chief Inspector of Explosives on 15 May 2006.

Mr Palaszczuk said consultations were held with industry stakeholders during the past two weeks in the development of the new regulations. "NRMW is also conducting an audit of sellers' records over the last six months of all explosives sales in the state and is continuing to cooperate with police in response to the recent allegation of the unauthorised purchase of explosives," he said.

People with explosives licenses are also reminded that they cannot legally give away explosives to another person, regardless of whether or not the other person has licence. "As well as being illegal, it would also undermine the intentions of the new requirements and such activities would be met with appropriate disciplinary action under the Explosives Act.

Source: Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water

Contractors gassed in Lane Cove tunnel

June 10 2006

Two contractors who were gassed by carbon monoxide fumes while working on the Lane Cove Tunnel project have accused operator Theiss John Holland of turning off extractor fans. The electricians were working the night shift on a diesel powered scissor lift in the tunnel about 11.30pm (AEST) last night when they began to feel nauseous.

One worker left the scene while the other was ordered to keep working with a facemask, said Dave McKinley of the Electrical Trade Union. Both were subsequently hospitalised with high levels of carbon monoxide in their systems. Mr McKinley said the workers believed Theiss John Holland had turned off above-ground extractor fans, allowing the toxic gases to accumulate. "There has been issues about air quality on this

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Is OHS A Joke?

By Kevin Jones

Recently, occupational health and safety (OHS) has been given a "bad press" in the electronic media with many examples of how an activity or behaviour has been stopped or excluded on the "unreasonable" grounds of OHS. Frequently people say that they have been prevented from using something, or doing something on the grounds that OHS prohibits them.

Let me provide a real personal example. In my local supermarket I asked a worker in the vegetable section whether the store had loose leafed baby spinach. He responded that they only have packaged spinach. On asking why I was told that it was because of OHS requirements. I contacted an OHS representative within the supermarket's head office who told me this was not the case. He told me that the packaged option was more likely to be on the grounds of food safety and hygiene.

OHS is getting buried in the interconnection of risk management, public liability and food hygiene. These disciplines, and more, need to be considered when we implement safety management systems, but OHS professionals can differentiate between disciplines, the public (and some of our prospective clients) do not.

In Victoria recently, there were four workplace fatalities over a period of ten days.

The reality of occupational health and safety is that if machines are not designed or operated properly, people will die. If electricity is not turned off when performing a maintenance task, people will die. If over head powerlines are too low or a truck is too high, people will die. If chainsaws are not handled with extreme care, or people work alone, or people are not wearing suitable protective clothing, people will die.

The most important aim of OHS management and legislative obligations is to avoid death and injury. I see a major role for OHS professionals and representative bodies as promoting safety in all parts of our lives.

We can do individual promotion by example:

- Hands-free mobile phone units in cars
- PPE of hearing protection and safety footwear when we are mowing our nature strips
- Appropriate sun protection on sunny days
- Insisting on new clients providing us with a site induction
- Asking worksites for PPE before entering a site

These are only a few individual examples of safe behaviour that promotes safety management.

By promoting safety, and by having our representatives contact the media, who are disparaging our profession, to protest, we would be supporting government initiatives on OHS promotion and make our own profession stronger.

I would gladly hear of examples of poor decisions made under the excuse of OHS. If you have examples please contact me at jonesk@sia.org.au





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project from the beginning," he said. "Questions remain as to why these extractor fans were turned off. We are hoping that there will be a full and thorough inquiry by WorkCover as to why this incident was allowed to occur, and to ensure that no other lives are placed at risk."

A spokeswoman for Theiss John Holland said she was not aware of the incident and would seek further information. Carbon monoxide poisoning can kill quickly, and with little warning.

AAP

Would-be robber injures female

June 9 2006

A female receptionist has suffered a neck injury during an attempted robbery at a resort on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Police say a would-be robber went to reception at the Sea Haven Resort on Hastings Street, Noosa Heads, about 8.30pm (AEST) yesterday and demanded cash. He indicated he was armed with a knife, a police spokeswoman said. The receptionist told him the only money was in a safe and she would have to telephone the manager to get the code. But when she picked up the phone the offender pushed her to the ground and fled empty handed. The receptionist was taken to Noosa Heads Hospital for treatment.

AAP

Australian worker killed in PNG mine workshop accident

June 5 2006

An Australian man has been killed in a workshop accident near the giant Ok Tedi copper and gold mine in Papua New Guinea.

The middle-aged man's name would not be released until his next of kin had been informed in Australia, mine management said today.

Friday's fatality occurred at contractor company Starwest Constructions Limited's workshop in the mining town of Tabubil below the mine in the Star Mountains of PNG's Western Province. The man was crushed while performing a maintenance task at the workshop, OK Tedi Mining Limited (OTML) said in a statement.

Starwest manager Justin McGann told AAP today the accident was being investigated by PNG's Mines Department and OTML had flown in an independent assessor from Australia to investigate the cause of the accident and review procedures. "It's a very tragic event up here. The workforce is obviously taking it to heart."

Starwest employed around 400 workers, including 20 Australian expatriates and workshop employees were being counselled following the accident, McGann said.

OTML has expressed its deepest sympathies to the family and friends of the deceased.

AAP

Employers can't sack you for being temporarily sick

7 June 2006

The Office of Workplace Services says an employer can't fire an employee for temporary absence from work .. because of personal illness or injury.

The warning comes as the office investigates the reported sacking of Melbourne woman .. Karen Palmer .. because her employer considers her a liability after 14 years of service. The factory machine operator was dismissed after a bout of illness and a workplace accident in which she injured her shoulder.

The Office of Workplace Services says workers who believe they've been treated unfairly under the federal government's new industrial laws .. should contact the office.

AAP

Winter Blitz Includes 'Dialling' Drivers

Brisbane, June 7 2006

Premier Peter Beattie and Police Minister Judy Spence have issued a strong warning for motorists to hang up on their hand-held mobile phone.

The warning comes amid the release of statistics on illegal mobile phone use - and on the eve of a ramped up winter roads campaign by police. Mr Beattie said police detection rates for drivers using hand-held phones had increased by 25% over the past three years.

"Three years ago Queensland Police issued 12,142 traffic infringement notices for mobile phone-related driving offences," Mr Beattie said. "By last year, this had risen to 15,253. These motorists are putting their lives and those of others at risk by continuing to use their phone while driving without a hands-free kit. This is an offence which incurs a \$225 fine plus 3 demerit points."

Source: Premier of Queensland, Minister for Police & Corrective Services

Stable worker, 16, critical after horse kick

MELBOURNE, June 7 2006

A 16-year-old stable worker is critically ill in a Melbourne hospital after being kicked in the head by a horse.

It is believed the teenage strapper was leading the horse through a gate in a paddock at a training complex on Holloway Road, Stawell, in western Victoria, shortly after 11am (AEST) today when the incident happened.

Police said the youth was taken to nearby Stawell hospital before being airlifted to The Alfred Hospital where he was in

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a critical condition.

The accident happened a day after WorkSafe Victoria released a report into safety standards in Victoria's horse racing industry.

WorkSafe executive director, John Merritt, said in the report the thoroughbred industry employed a wide range of people, all of whom needed the highest level of protection. "WorkSafe has been working with the industry over the past two years to help it improve its understanding of safety issues," Mr Merritt said. The industry now has a much clearer understanding of its obligations and is working toward making improvements. The challenge now is for that knowledge to be applied in all facets of the industry."

A WorkSafe Victoria spokesman said that today's accident may not have been witnessed but inspectors were continuing investigations. AAP

Racing report identifies a need for safety improvements.

June 6, 2006

A report on Victoria's thoroughbred racing industry has called for a shift in approach and attitudes toward workplace safety.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said the industry employed a wide range of people from stable hands and strappers, to gate staff, caterers, ground staff, trainers and jockeys all of whom needed the highest level of protection.

"WorkSafe has been working with the industry over the past two years to help it improve its understanding of safety issues. The industry now has a much clearer understanding of its obligations and is working toward making improvements."

RVL Acting Chief Executive Officer Stephen Allanson said the industry was committed to addressing workplace safety issues. "RVL is working with WorkSafe, the clubs and its industry partners in developing an industry OH&S Improvement Plan which addresses the report's recommendations," Mr Allanson said.

The report finds:

- There is a sense of inevitability that injuries will occur and a fear of reporting injuries.
- Culture change is needed so the health and safety of employees becomes a higher priority than that of horses;
- Hazard identification and management requires improvement. The industry needs to identify and develop priorities for action;
- There is a need for a more formal approach to hazard identification. This includes design issues at racing and training facilities, starting barriers and separation of horses, vehicles and people;
- Those with responsibility for hazard control need to be more proactive and responsive to hazard reports;
- Training education and mentoring programs need to be tailored to the varying needs of different employees within the industry;
- Research should be carried out to look at health issues affecting jockeys and their weight and fatigue.

The report was produced for WorkSafe by the Victorian Institute of Occupational Safety and Health at the University of Ballarat. Source: WorkSafe

Worker freed after cave-in

BRISBANE, June 8 2006

A Telstra worker trapped in a trench cave-in has been freed after a six-hour rescue operation in Brisbane's south.

The 32-year-old man emerged from the two metre-deep trench at about 7.45am (AEST) after about 30 firefighters used tools, their hands and buckets to rescue him. He was laying pipes when the trench at Archerfield collapsed at about 1.30am (AEST) today, dropping about two tonnes of soil on him. His leg was trapped under a pipe and crews worked meticulously around the man to ensure the trench did not collapse on him. The worker was taken to hospital for treatment but the full extent of his injuries are not immediately known.

"He's in a fair bit of pain at the moment," Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS)'s Andrew Berkman told Network Seven. He said another two workers managed to escape the cave-in. "Paramedics have been working with Queensland Fire and Rescue crews," Mr Berkman earlier told ABC Radio. "He's obviously been in there for over five hours, so they have been administering some medication to him to keep him calm and try and prevent him from going into shock."

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SIA EVENTS

The Visions Conference 2006

Venue:

Rydges International Resort, Yeppoon

August 30, 31 - September 1 2006

www.sia.org.au

The Safety Conference, Sydney NSW

17 - 19 October 2006

www.thesafetyshow.com.

OTHER EVENTS

Crane Seminars In Queensland

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland will conduct a series of Queensland Crane Strategy Seminars across the state during the next few months.

Dates, times and bookings are available at <http://www.dir.qld.gov.au/workplace/training/events/cranes/index.htm>

Waves of Change

Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists, Inc.

Venue: Surfers Paradise Marriott Resort, Gold Coast QLD

2-6 December 2006

For more information email mailto: conference@aioh.org.au



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QFRS' Peter Rekers said ambulance crews medicated the man throughout the ordeal. Mr Rekers said there was a "hell of a lot of pressure" on the man's feet after the trench collapsed on his legs. However, he said the worker appeared to be in "pretty good spirits" throughout the rescue. AAP

Public Safety First: WorkSafe update on Arthurs Seat Chairlift

June 6, 2006

WorkSafe is continuing to investigate the most recent serious safety incident at the Arthurs Seat chairlift which left a number of people stranded after a malfunction in the rope system on May 16.

As with the previous incidents in 2004 and 2005 WorkSafe is investigating this latest incident and will not allow the ride to re-open until the operator can demonstrate that it can operate safely. A non-disturbance notice remains in place on the chairlift.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt said the operator must be able to demonstrate a capacity to operate safely. "The primary responsibility for safety lies with the ride operator. Our investigation, like those in the past, must of necessity be detailed. "WorkSafe will not change its approach now. Some tourism operators might be concerned about the time that investigations take however public safety must always be paramount as must be understanding the cause of recurring incidents."

WorkSafe's investigation is also looking beyond the cause of the most recent incident. There is a focus on maintenance, changes to the ride's design after past incidents, and the operator's emergency management plans. Independent engineers have been commissioned by WorkSafe to help safety investigators determine the cause of the May 16 incident.

The company operating the Arthurs Seat chairlift (Arthurs Seat Scenic Chairlift Pty Ltd) has been charged in relation to a 2004 incident in which a chair on the lift came loose and slid down the cable, colliding with another chair and injuring an elderly woman. The charge alleges one breach of section 22 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act for failing to control risks to persons other than employees.

The operator yesterday confirmed it would contest the charge, which is set down for a hearing in the County Court in August 2006.

Source: WorkSafe

Sydney company convicted of obstructing union officials

June 2 2006

A Sydney company has been convicted of unlawfully obstructing union officials who were investigating reports of health and safety breaches.

WorkCover said that Ourcorp Pty Ltd has been convicted of two charges in the NSW Chief Industrial Magistrates Court. The offences relate to two Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Union being ordered off the company's premises by the warehouse manager while they were undertaking a safety inspection in September 2004.

At the time, the officials complied with the manager's request and reported the incident to WorkCover. But under the Occupational Health and Safety Act a person must not obstruct, hinder or impede an authorised official in the exercise of the official function.

Chief Industrial Magistrate Gregory Hart found the union officials were at the warehouse to conduct an inspection in response to complaints over safety issues and had been obstructed. The case is listed for further hearing on June 28 about penalties. AAP

Adobe Acrobat V7.08 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 20 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 7.08 please email me at 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.

For those readers who are unconcerned about download limits, the latest version of Acrobat Reader is available for free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

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