



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Fatigued Driving A Killer, Says Australasian College Of Road Safety

The Australasian College of Road Safety has launched a priority road safety campaign on fatigue for the summer holidays.

'Fatigue is a bigger factor in road crashes than is generally believed, says ACRS President Kerry Fitzgerald.

'Estimates vary because it is difficult to identify a fatigue related crash, but it is thought that up to 30% of fatal crashes could have fatigue as a major contributing factor. This is comparable to alcohol, which currently accounts for about 27-28% of driver and rider deaths nationally.

'Whether a crash was caused by fatigue is difficult to identify because unlike alcohol, falling asleep leaves no trace afterwards. In addition, many crashes that are attributed to inattention or negligence could have some element of fatigue.

'Most people associate driver fatigue with driving long distances, but that is only part of it. Simply being continuously awake, regardless of what you do during the day or night, can affect driving performance.

'For example, in two Australian research studies, it was found that people kept awake for 17-19 hours had their driving performance affected as much as if they were at the legal blood alcohol limit of 0.05.

'If you are seriously sleep deprived, you can fall asleep without warning. The danger is especially great between midnight and early morning, because of the human body's propensity to sleep in those hours. There is also a 'low' period during the afternoon.'

Simple measures are available to avoid the dangers of fatigue. The most important are:

- Get a good night's sleep before travelling: repay any sleep debt
- Many people leave for holidays after work on Friday. This should really be avoided if possible. The effect of a full day's wakefulness and a day's work will affect alertness, judgement and anticipation
- Plan the trip to allow for rest breaks
- Take frequent breaks. There is no research evidence on a 'good' rest interval, but the usual suggestion of a break every two hours is good advice.
- Know what signs to look for. Passengers can look for some of these too and alert the driver.
 - wandering in the lane or over lane lines
 - changes in speed, especially slowing down without reason
 - yawning
 - nodding
 - lapses in concentration.

Finally and very importantly, remember that alcohol is a central nervous

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ADVERTISING

A limited amount of advertising has been approved by the Safety Institute of Australia.

If you want to advertise to over 3,000 safety professionals in Australia, please contact Joanne at the SIA Secretariat through natadmin@sia.org.au

SIA SECRETARIAT NOTICE

Office Closure for Christmas period - The office will be closed from Friday 22/12/2006 to Friday 05/01/2007 (Inclusive) We will re open on Monday the 8th January 2007

Reminder Notice to Unfinancial members - Members who have not renewed their SIA Membership for the current financial year, 2006/2007 will be receiving a reminder notice in the mail shortly





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system depressant, and that even small amounts of alcohol when you are also fatigued can have an effect on driving performance. Source: Australasian College Of Road Safety Inc

Queensland Workers And Businesses Worse Off Under Federal Workers Compensation Scheme December 13 2006

Queensland workers and businesses will be worse off if there is a take over of the States system by the federal Comcare scheme Queensland Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations John Mickel said today.

"As examples a worker who becomes tetraplegic (paralysis of hands, impaired upper body movement and paralysis of the trunk and lower limbs) who was earning \$1000/week gross and with a dependant spouse and children aged 7 and 8 at the time of injury. Could receive 7% less compensation (\$100 000) if their employer was insured under Comcare rather than the Queensland Workcover scheme", Mr Mickel said.

"A worker who is killed who was earning \$1000/week with a dependant spouse and two children aged 7 and 8 could receive \$100 000 less if their employer was insured through Comcare instead of Queensland's Workcover Scheme"

"Furthermore under the Queensland Scheme workers still have access to common law and journey claims, the Commonwealth Government has announced it will be abolishing journey claims under Comcare"

The Commonwealth is allowing corporations that compete against the Commonwealth to self insure under the Comcare Scheme.

"Companies operating in Queensland should remain with the Queensland system because Queensland has lower average premiums for businesses while providing better entitlements for workers."

The average premium in Queensland is 1.20%, the Comcare (Federal Scheme) is 1.77%, the Queensland average has decreased by 22.6% over the last 5 years whilst Comcare's average levy has increased by 56.6% over the last five years.

"I fear the extension of Comcare to corporations that compete against the Commonwealth will be extended and workers and their families will be worse off," Mr Mickel said.

Source: Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations

Mutual Recognition Of Construction Induction Cards December 18 2006

Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations John Mickel today announced new measures that will simplify licensing requirements for Queensland construction workers working interstate.

From 1 January, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria will recognise construction induction cards issued in each other's jurisdictions.

Mr Mickel said that mutual recognition would be a boon to workers looking to expand their horizons.

"Before the introduction of the mutual recognition of the construction induction cards, all workers undertaking construction work, or removing asbestos materials, needed evidence of having completed a general induction in Queensland. With the changes, training taken in New South Wales or Victoria will also be recognised," Mr Mickel said.

"Similarly, Queensland workers can operate in either of those states on their existing blue cards. Mutual recognition allows certified or qualified workers to practice across state borders, secure in the knowledge that they are conforming to the local rules and regulations," Mr Mickel said.

Mutual recognition will not mean a decline in safety standards. Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria have record low levels of workplace injuries and fatalities.

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Rocks and Hard Places

By Melody Kemp

Victim mentality and fear are well entrenched in the postmodern Western mindset. Curiously for someone like me, Australians are fearful of being victims of terrorism and avian flu, and a teacher can get a huge settlement for not checking behind her to see if the theatre seat was down before she sat on it.

This November's meeting of the Asian Network of Occupational Accident Victims in Bangkok was an inspiring event. In fact victim hardly suits the doggedly courageous and stubborn acts of workers determined to seek justice and recognition of appalling work related injuries.

I have been criticized for being political, so those who think the world revolves on technology can switch off now.

Most of the effected the workers would make an occupational physician run for their stethoscopes, as they represented illnesses now relegated to the chapters called History of Occupational Health in university texts. Cases of frank cadmium poisoning, aluminium intoxication, byssinosis and a massive upsurge in silicosis were all represented in the hopeful faces of the delegates, any of whom had resisted police intimidation and wrongly diagnosis and court rejection. The battery producing factory that had also produced falling hair, joint and kidney pains was, we were told, ISO 14000 accredited.

Globalisation or internationalization of production and the Free Trade Agreements that follow, are good camouflage for worker exploitation and misrepresentation. Western diplomats and trade representatives have been disturbingly silent about labour standards in China, which clearly violate norms set by the International Labor Organization. It's partly because they're loathe to rock a system that's allowing Western corporations and governments to reap huge profits.

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"We are streamlining our systems but maintaining our high safety standards.

"And we won't be stopping there. The states will continue to work together to explore improvements that benefit everyone in the workplace," Mr Mickel said.

Source: Minister for State Development, Employment and Industrial Relations

Second Latrobe Valley power industry death 13 December 2006

WorkSafe has met with senior officials of power industry maintenance contractor, Silcar, and Loy Yang Power after a worker died and another was seriously hurt at the weekend.

A 23-year-old Traralgon man died and another was left with serious arm injuries when a steel hatch fell on them as maintenance work was underway in a section of a coal mill at Loy Yang 'A' power station around 5:30am on Saturday.

A maintenance worker died after being struck on the head by a steel beam which fell on him at the Yallourn open cut mine on 31 October.

The Director of WorkSafe's Construction and Utilities Division, Geoff Thomas, this week sought commitments that the companies would ensure their workplaces were as safe as practicable and that procedures and systems of work were in place to achieve this.

In parallel with WorkSafe's investigation, the companies have commissioned their own external and independent studies of work practices and processes around workplace health and safety.

Silcar has advised that Safety & Forensic Engineering Pty Ltd would review and address any acute issues. This is expected to begin next week. The Zeal group will perform a safety review for Silcar with a longer term focus beginning in January.

Twenty-eight people have died in work-related deaths this year compared with 18 in the whole of 2005. Six of those deaths have been in the past two weeks.

The most recent death was on Sunday when a truck-mounted drilling rig ran out of control down a steep incline on private land near Clonbinane (approx 10km east of Kilmore), killing a 21-year old Western Australian man who was driving.

Source: WorkSafe

Distribution company fined \$45,000 over death of worker

December 13, 2006

A Belmont wholesale distribution company has been fined \$45,000 for failing to provide a safe workplace after a contractor died following a fall from an elevating order picker.

GBI Sales Pty Ltd pleaded guilty in the Perth Magistrates Court last week to failing to provide and maintain a safe working environment after the man died in January 2005, two days after falling from the order picker.

An order picker is a device similar to a forklift, but where the operator is elevated simultaneously with the tines.

The man who died had been contracted by GBI Sales to perform work related to the installation of a security system in a new warehouse at the Belmont premises. The work required the contractor to access roof trusses and the top level of shelving.

On January 20, 2005, the contractor asked a GBI Sales employee to elevate him on the order picker so he could retrieve some cabling from the top shelf.

The order picker was equipped with a harness attached by a lanyard meant for use by the operator. However neither the operator nor the contractor used it on this occasion – the contractor stood on a pallet which had been placed over the tines while being elevated.

As the employee was lowering the contractor, the

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A recent survey of 1,800 U.S. businesses in China by the American Chamber of Commerce in Beijing found that the profit margins for 42 percent of them were higher than their average worldwide margins. Australia also stands to gain, but without the watchdog organizations that America has in place.

But Chinese and Korean, Taiwanese and Indian, Bangladesh and Philippino workers are fighting back with help from groups like Greenpeace who are staging an E waste campaign, highlighting the dangers inherent in some of the big name in technology like HP, Acer and Motorola. A powerful Power Point presentation showed Asian kids sorting through mountains of e waste including mobile phones and recycled computers while their parents melted down components in the background. Bromides, and organic solvents were released into the air their testing showed.

Bangladesh and Indian delegates told of their shores being used for ship breaking spilling asbestos PCB's and other hazardous waste into the peoples living and working environments. Many of the ships came on from Europe despite public outrage.

Chinese workers with advanced second stage silicosis had with a little help from regional NGO's attended the annual gem fair in Basel to protest the effects of unsafe gem cutting. Large companies like Firestone Gems, Liz Claiborne and comedienne turned entrepreneur, Joan Rivers subcontract to people like Lucky Gems in China. Air quality reports have shown that some work stations had ambient silica concentrations as high as 70 times the standard allowed by the Chinese safety code, which is less strict than related American and European standards by a factor of 20. Embarrassingly Claiborne had to recall a child's bracelet made in China as it was found to contain lead. But what about the workers.

Between that and a burgeoning gem and stone cutting sector, pneumoconioses

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contractor fell from the order picker to the concrete floor below. He died two days later from his injuries. Source: DOCEP

WA OSH Act Review Report December 12 2006

The Minister has today tabled the fourth statutory review report into the OSH Act. A PDF copy of the report is now available at www.docep.wa.gov.au/

Source: DOCEP

Demolition business operator fined for lack of demolition licence December 12, 2006

The operator of a demolition business has been fined \$1200 for carrying out demolition work without a licence.

Paul Steven Wessels – trading as Wes’s Demolition & Salvage – pleaded guilty in the Northam Magistrates Court last week to performing demolition work without being the holder of an appropriate demolition licence.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that the licensing system for demolition work in WA was introduced for very good reasons.

“The licensing of demolition contractors was implemented to help ensure that the hazardous work of demolition would be performed in safe manner,” Ms Lyhne said. Source: DOCEP

Survey reveals teachers being bullied by work colleagues SYDNEY, December 14 2006

NSW school teachers are bullying each other, a confidential survey has revealed.

The survey, sent out by the Teachers Federation to teachers at primary and high schools, found an “overwhelming majority” claimed to have been bullied, News Ltd newspapers report.

Often the bullying occurred once a week, the vast majority of it was verbal and psychological while the most common targets were older women working in a primary school and many employed on a casual basis.

Federation president Maree O’Halloran said the results were being taken very seriously.

“This seems to be an endemic problem and we have to find a solution to it,” she told News Ltd.

Researchers said once all of the data had been collated more specific information to identify who was doing the bullying would be reported.

The Teachers Federation sent out 1,000 surveys with 250 responses received, most of which showed a “high incidence” of bullying. AAP

Man airlifted to hospital after being hit by steel rod SYDNEY, December 12 2006

A man has been airlifted to a Sydney hospital after being hit in the head by a steel rod in a workplace accident.

The 30-year-old man from Albion Park, south of Wollongong, told colleagues he was fine after the incident today, but suffered a seizure after he climbed into his car.

An ambulance took him to Wollongong Hospital but he has since been flown to St George Hospital by the Westpac Lifesaver Rescue Helicopter. AP

Alcohol abuse costs businesses over \$400m CANBERRA, December 11 2006

Alcohol consumption in the workplace goes far beyond a couple of beers at the office Christmas party and has become a major problem for business, costing more than \$400 million per year. Continued on page 5

could balloon out of control in South Asia in the next few years.

A young Indian industrial hygienist, Pranjali Goswami, one of the few working with an NGO, has developed a wet cutting process which can effectively remove toxic dust from gem and other stone cutting activities. Cost is the big issue. Many gem cutters are small shops which on sell to bigger traders. There is huge resistance to using expensive and retrofitted equipment. Pranjali’s system costs around USD40 to build. It removes the slurry which can be contained and recycled as bricks or other useful materials.

But he has no funds for R and D. And I mean no funds. The NGO with whom he has an annual budget the same as what an Australian safety manager would make in one month. Within that budget they provide services to workers such as OHS education, medical examinations, support children at school while their parents are in hospital, pay hospital and medical costs as well as assisting workers through the Byzantine maze of the Indian compensation system.

I gave him USD 100 to develop two more prototypes. But he has another fume exhaust system in the wings: another piece of appropriate technology from the economic South that could save innumerable lives, languishing for lack of funds.

I had the idea that the SIA might like to sponsor annual prize for excellence in design for appropriate safety technology in the Third World. How about its SIA? An annual prize of AUD5000 would help aspiring designers save lives.

Melody Kemp is an ex-pat Australia who currently resides in Laos. As well as working on OHS matters throughout the Asian region she is also the author of Working for Life: Sourcebook on Occupational Health for Women, an excellent publication available for download at www.amrc.org.hk





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The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's largest business organisation, has called for a collective effort by individuals, industry, unions, health professionals and regulators on combating the problem of drug and alcohol usage in the workplace.

This follows research by the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction at Flinders University that found that 2.5 million workdays were directly lost to alcohol consumption in 2001, and indirectly 7.5 million days were lost.

The direct impacts on the economy amounted to \$437 million per year, and \$1.2 billion indirectly.

"Until now, the problem of excessive alcohol consumption on our roads has been well known, but the problem in the workplace has not been widely understood," said ACCI chief executive Peter Hendy.

However, he says these findings are not a surprise and confirm anecdotal concerns of employers that alcohol and drug usage is a significant and growing challenge for managers and the community.

"For employers, this is both a workplace safety and productivity matter. For the community, it is a health matter."

Mr Hendy says there is no one solution, but it does start with individual responsibility.

"Employers have a right to expect employees to present for work in a state that is safe and productive, and to clamp down on misuse of sick leave. Employers should make workplace policy clear, and remove safety risks where foreseeable and practical."

A recent ACCI survey of 549 union and non-union agreements shows that only 25 per cent specifically address the drug and alcohol issue, but did adopt a variety of approaches.

These included provision for leave to attend rehabilitation, the implementation of employee assistance programs, and disciplinary, counselling and testing protocols.

They also included zero tolerance policies in industries where employee or public safety is at risk, such as building, mining, aviation and transport.

Mr Hendy said employers needed new management tools to deal with the problem.

"Employers are lay people and not health professionals, and often have little or no past exposure to alcohol or drug misuse or addiction," Mr Hendy said.

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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