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Academy of University OHS Education & Research – The Sydney Declaration

The Safety Institute of Australia and University-based OHS educators agree to the need for engagement and communication among those who educate our OHS professionals as part of “safe guarding Australia”.

To SIA members

Representatives of 15 of the 17 universities offering OHS professional education in Australia, together with representatives of three OHS regulators, met at a forum held in Sydney on the 23rd and 24th April. This forum was conducted as part of a project funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council titled Safe Guarding Australians: Mapping the strengths, challenges and gaps toward sustainable improvements in learning outcomes from diverse models of OHS education which is being conducted by a consortium of 6 universities and the SIA OHS Educators Chapter.

One of the outcomes of the forum was the identified need for a strong community of practice where university-based educators of OHS professionals and also researchers could engage in discussion on academic and education issues and raise the profile of OHS professional education and research. The high level of interest and commitment to such a “community” led to development and release of the “Sydney Communiqué” below.

This communiqué highlights that the forum identified the need for the university-based OHS educators and researchers to be clearly identified as a group or “academy” that identified their background and interests. The SIA OHS Educators’ Chapter was identified as the most appropriate “vehicle” for this academy and it is likely that it will sit within the Chapter; the actual structure and details are yet to be completed.

This is an exciting development for the SIA, for the educators, and for the profession. Further information will be circulated to members in the coming weeks.

Communiqué - 24th April 2009

Academy of University OHS Education & Research – The Sydney Declaration

Currently, 5% of Australian GDP is consumed annually by the cost of workplace incidents, injuries, disease and fatalities nationwide.

In this context, the emerging Academy of University OHS Education and Research met in Sydney today to contribute to the ALTC project Safe Guarding Australians.

At the forum 15 of the 17 universities that currently deliver OHS tertiary programs across Australia were represented. During the forum, key issues identified included the need to:

- *articulate the core body of OHS knowledge for accreditation of courses,*
- *enhance the role and profile of OHS university education & research,*
- *enhance the quality and sustainability of OHS education, and*
- *increase the number of OHS research higher degree scholarships.*

The Academy is strongly committed to taking action on these matters and calls on the community, industry and OHS regulators to work with us. Source: SIA OHS Educators’ Chapter

Employers Fined For Explosion, Machine Injuries And Fall

1 May 2009

The dangers of painting and welding in confined spaces; insufficient machinery guarding and working at height have been highlighted in a series of penalty decisions by South Australian Industrial Magistrates in the last 24 hours.

Port Lincoln-based **Diesel and Marine Services Pty Ltd** was today fined a total of

SIA NEWS

Sydney Safety Conference – Call for Papers

27-29 October 2009, Sydney Showground, Sydney Olympic Park.

The Sydney Safety Conference attracts health & safety personnel from a wide range of industries. The Conference Committee is currently working on the Speaker Program and is calling for papers from industry leaders who wish to present a session on relevant issues/objectives. Papers can take the form of case studies, research, workshops, time for presentation can vary from 20 to 45 minutes. For further information please go to <http://www.sia.org.au/>

SIA EVENTS

For further information on the following upcoming SIA Events please go to <http://www.sia.org.au/calendar>

SIA VIC Women in Health and Safety Network Breakfast- BOOK NOW

Tue 12 May 2009, Eureka Tower Level 89 7 Riverside Quay, Southbank

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\$72,000 after pleading guilty to two breaches of workplace safety laws.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company after an explosion at the company's Port Lincoln premises in May 2006, having found that welding sparks caused paint fumes to ignite and explode inside a confined space of a large fishing boat that was undergoing maintenance. There was no extractor fan in place to remove the volatile fumes nor was there any system in place to check for possible sources of ignition.

A 52 year old painter and a 32 year old labourer were treated in hospital for burns at the time, and suffered other lasting injuries including hearing and sight loss, shoulder and skin problems and post traumatic stress disorder.

Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke said the offending "combined to endanger the life of (one worker) and to place (the second worker) at risk of serious injury".

"The risks of spray-painting and welding in a confined space, particularly of this nature, were obvious," says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"Clearly safety was not factored into the planning of work aboard the boat that day, and the consequences of not doing so have cost two workers their health and well-being."

Paperlinx Australia Pty Ltd was fined \$26,250 yesterday by Industrial Magistrate Richard Hardy after pleading guilty to one charge concerning a serious injury sustained by an employee, whose right hand was trapped in the rollers of a stationery-manufacturing machine.

The incident happened in September 2006 at the company's Regency Park premises as the employee tried to clear excess paper from the rollers while the machine was in operation.

SafeWork SA took the prosecution on the basis the while the danger had been identified, guarding and other safety measures still had not been installed.

The male worker suffered crushing and degloving (skin loss) injuries, and has been left with chronic pain, incapacity, and mental health issues.

The company already had a previous conviction over a similar kind of incident, but has since improved its safety procedures.

Tractor Rollover

1 May 2009

The driver of a tractor was treated by paramedics for back pain and a head laceration after the vehicle rolled at Upper Flagstone. Firefighters and paramedics were called to the scene on Gormans Gap Road around 1.15pm. The driver was transported to Toowoomba Base Hospital in a stable condition.

Source: Q'ld Dept of Emergency Services

Today **National Foods Ltd** was fined \$9,000 by Industrial Magistrate Michael Ardlie after pleading guilty to one charge laid over an incident at its Murray Bridge dairy factory in December 2006.

A male employee was lucky to escape with minor cuts and scrapes after his head and body were caught between the mesh interlock guard and the hoop-positioning chute of a machine called a 'Rotary Hoop Filler'.

He leaned into the machine trying to fix a faulty switch, unaware that the machine was set to run automatically. Fortunately co-workers quickly freed him.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company having found that the machine was not maintained in a safe condition and was inadequately guarded, despite the company's otherwise strong workplace safety measures.

Also today, **R Rancic Holdings Pty Ltd** trading as Adriatic Slumber Bedding was fined \$24,000 after pleading guilty to one charge of breaching section 19(1) the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986.

In June 2006, an employee suffered a fractured skull when he fell backwards a distance of 1.7 metres as he tried to retrieve an item of stock from a high shelf. He still suffers a range of disabling symptoms and is unable to drive or work full-time.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company, which manufactures mattresses at its Dry Creek

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SIA - SUPPORTED EVENTS

Dust Explosions Seminar - NSW

The SIA is supporting the Dust Explosions 2009 conference, which will be conducted by Informa, at the Penrith Panthers, Penrith NSW from 10-11 June 2009 inclusive.

This conference is supported by the SIA. As such, SIA members will be eligible to receive a 10% discount on registering, as well as receive 1 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) point per day of the conference.

More information is available at <http://www.informa.com.au/dustexplosions>

Totally Safety Culture - NSW

The 4th Annual
Total Safety
Culture 2009

29 & 30 July 2009
Amora Hotel Jamison, Sydney

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factory, on the basis of an inadequate hazard identification and risk assessment process; a failure to develop a safe working method; a failure to prevent unsafe access to the shelves and a failure to provide reasonable fall protection.

The incident happened despite an assessment, which identified the risk some months earlier, but Magistrate Ardlie described the company's attempt to deal with the problem as "inadequate and tardy".

"Inadequate machine guarding and insufficient fall protection account for a sizeable proportion of preventable workplace injuries major and minor," says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"What we find disturbing about the last three cases is that the hazards were obvious and had been identified, but the preventative action was simply inadequate or just too late."

Source: SafeWorkSA

Business Continuity Planning Essential For Swine Flu Recovery

1 May 2009

Risk Management Institution of Australasia Ltd Western Australian president Marg Hemsley says business continuity planning is essential for organisations to weather the ramifications of a swine flu epidemic.

"Organisations must focus on protecting their workers and implement business continuity planning to ensure critical functions and services are maintained," she said.

Ms Hemsley, a risk management consultant, was involved in Western Australia's planning for a potential "bird flu" epidemic. She said Australian organisations were well placed to respond to a swine flu epidemic, but had to ensure they were not complacent.

"In discussing the bird flu epidemic, many businesses thought they would not be affected because they didn't deal with birds. There is a risk of the same attitude."

She warned organisations to consider the ramifications of having insufficient workers. The cause may not necessarily be infected workers, but those affected through social distancing, for example, the potential closure of child care centres.

Organisations in service industries, which relied on human resources, would be impacted more heavily. "What impact would major absenteeism have on your business," she said. "What about staff shortages at suppliers or customers' premises?"

It was important for organisations to focus on "facts not hysteria". The media and health departments had a role to play in informing organisations of appropriate responses.

The Federal Government's quick move to implement airport screening for international passengers showed robust risk management plans were in place and able to be implemented quickly, Ms Hemsley said.

Source: RMIA

Risks To Life And Limb Identified In Cranbourne

30 April 2009

WorkSafe inspectors issued six Prohibition Notices during a week-long inspection campaign in Cranbourne from 20 - 24 April ordering work to stop because of serious and immediate risks to workers' safety.

Inspectors were in the Cranbourne area as part of a 'Safer Work Zones' campaign, which aims to help small businesses improve health and safety and Return to Work.

WorkSafe is concerned that despite advising workplaces that inspectors would be in the area, serious safety issues were still identified:

- Two Prohibition Notices were issued at separate construction sites when workers were at immediate risk of falling six metres from roofs.
- Another Prohibition Notice was issued at a site where workers were at risk of

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SIA Bushfire Submission preparation

By Kevin Jones FSIA

The Safety Institute of Australia (SIA) is taking its submission to Victoria's Bushfire Royal Commission very seriously. Each draft of the submission is much thicker than the previous as more and more perspectives are introduced.

I was privy to a quickly organized meeting over a week ago where external subject matter experts provided the SIA with important information about how bushfires interact with buildings, the benchmarking of risk conditions, and the all important evidence of similar fire situations around the world, and in Australia's history.

The Royal Commission submission is the first to be coordinated by Dr George Rechnitzer (CFSIA) who is also the Chair of the SIA's National Technical Panel. George's involvement is providing the submission with an additional level of rigour to the submission preparation.

The submission is also important for the SIA as a professional organization. Although not privy to the SIA's branding strategy, the SIA has endeavoured for sometime to achieve a prominence that it believes it deserves. The Bushfire submission will be authoritative, evidence-based, succinct with its recommendations, and a document about which all members can be proud.

The SIA is also conscious that the nature and structure of this particular Royal Commission means that the SIA may not be invited to provide a personal presentation so all of its effort must go into the written submission.

As is the current trend, public comment phases are short and the SIA has done a very good job in pulling together information from members and others as quickly as

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falling seven metres into an excavation.

- Two Prohibition Notices were issued at a hairdressing salon where unsafe electrical equipment put workers at immediate risk of electric shock
- One Prohibition Notice was issued at an automotive repairer to stop the spraying of isocyanate paints without appropriate respiratory equipment. Isocyanates can cause immediate health problems including lung damage, eye irritation and asthma. Recurrent overexposure can lead to liver and kidney damage and blood disorders.

WorkSafe inspectors visited 147 Cranbourne workplaces as part of the campaign. Apart from the Prohibition Notices, 71 Improvement Notices were issued ordering specific safety issues to be fixed.

Another 21 safety issues were fixed on-the-spot while inspectors were present. These included the removal of tripping hazards, incorrectly storing LPG cylinders and basic forklift maintenance.

Inspectors will soon return to Cranbourne to ensure notices are complied with.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt said, "while it is good that issues were fixed on-the-spot and that more will be fixed because of WorkSafe's notices, we are concerned that businesses may have otherwise let these safety issues remain in their workplace.

"We're particularly concerned about the high number of Prohibition Notices, one of the highest ever for this type of campaign. These are the most serious notices and are only issued where there is an immediate risk to life.

WorkSafe is also concerned that 34 breaches to the Accident Compensation Act were identified, in some cases employers had not kept registers of injuries or displayed information about what people should do if they were hurt.

Mr Merritt said it was the most basic things that added to the death and injury toll.

"So far this year, there have been 11 work-related deaths in Victoria. Look after your workers, look after your mates and look after your self by fixing safety issues."

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

Man Seriously Injured In Industrial Accident

29 April 2009

A 55-year-old man is in a serious condition with chest and leg injuries after a fuel tank, believed to be empty, exploded at an industrial premises on the Leichhardt Highway at Miles this afternoon. Paramedics responded to the scene just before 1pm and transported the man to Miles Hospital. The Careflight rescue helicopter has since airlifted the patient to the Mater Hospital.

Source: Q'ld Dept of Emergency Services

Scrap Recycler Fined Over Workplace Death

30 April 2009

A prominent Adelaide scrap metal business has been convicted and fined in the SA Industrial Relations Court this afternoon over the death of a truck driver on its premises.

Thirty three year old Brian Murphy had completed his first delivery run to the premises of Normetals Pty Ltd at Ottoway on the 7th of December 2006, when he was struck and killed by a bundle of steel tubes dislodged by a Normetals forklift operator.

The court heard Mr. Murphy's death had a "devastating impact" on his partner of ten years, his three children and his extended family.

Today Normetals was fined \$52,000 after a discount of 20 per cent for contrition and its plea of guilty to breaching section 22(2) (a) of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986, in that it failed to ensure the safety of a person at a workplace under its management and control.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company after finding there were no safe operating procedures in place for the loading and unloading of trucks at the workplace.

It had earlier told the court that the following simple and inexpensive measures could have prevented Mr. Murphy's death:

- A 'safe zone' for visiting drivers during the loading and unloading process.

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it can. The deadline for submissions is May 18.

More information on the SIA submission to the Royal Commission into the 2009 Victorian Bushfires can be found at <http://www.sia.org.au> or by contacting the National SIA Administrator on 1800 808 380.

As soon as possible after the submission is lodged, the full SIA submission will be available to all members through the SIA website. The SIA Member's Discussion Forum will also establish a discussion thread on the submission.

The URL for the Bushfire Royal Commission is <http://www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/>

WorkCover Victoria Prosecution Results Summaries

Maruata Brown - 30/4/09

Summary: Asbestos removal work performed without a license

<http://www.l.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/LSID162786>

Bryce Lewelyn Kent - 30/4/09

Summary: trenching excavation offence by employee

<http://www.l.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/LSID163429>

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- A marked 'exclusion zone' around the truck to remind drivers of the danger.
- Some form of physical barrier to prevent entry by people to the loading zone.

Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke said that Normetals had a "significant responsibility with respect to the unloading process..."

"It was the Normetals driver who operated the forklift and who directed the unloading on its premises. Mr. Murphy was not in control of the work process..."

"The circumstances that gave rise to the incident were not due to a momentary lapse... The absence of its own safe operating procedures... is a serious breach of its obligations..."

The company has since improved its safety systems for loading operations, and had highlighted to the magistrate its 25 years of prior operations without a major incident.

"By any objective standard, what safety system there was for moving heavy loads to and from trucks on the premises was clearly deficient, and in breach of the employer's legal obligations," says Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"The extent of that deficiency was such that when the 'system' failed, the consequences were horrific and tragic.

"Employers should never be lulled into a false sense of security by assuming they will never have a safety incident in the future, simply because they haven't had one in the past."

Source: SafeWorkSA

Fine Over Crush Injuries At Wheel Factory

Yesterday, an Adelaide car component maker was fined \$27,500 over an incident in which a young male worker had his hand trapped in a machine.

Arrowcrest Group Pty Ltd had already pleaded guilty to breaching section 19(1) of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986 in failing to ensure the safety of an employee.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the company after investigating an incident in February 2005 at the company's Woodville North factory, where it manufactures wheels for the automotive industry.

A 20 year old university student, who was placed at the factory by a labour hire company, had gone to assist a colleague having difficulty with a so-called 'leak testing machine'.

As the worker placed his hand into the machine to correct it, the machine was activated by the colleague. The worker suffered lacerations and bone damage to four fingers of his right hand, but has largely recovered since.

In pleading guilty, the company effectively admitted:

- it failed to adequately guard the machine
- it failed to provide a safe system of work
- it failed to provide adequate information, instruction, training and supervision.

The safe work procedures did not account for the presence of a second employee, and the company has since addressed that issue as well as installing appropriate guarding.

Source: SafeWorkSA

Fatigue Is The Biggest Threat To A Person's Safety

By Kevin Jones, FSIA

Not so long ago, it was considered a legitimate criticism to blame the individual for "doing the wrong thing" at work. Depending on the type of worksite, this was considered "human error" or bloody stupid".

Fatigue is an interesting illustration of how occupational health and safety must cope with new perspectives on established hazards. Australian OHS legislation operates on a responsibility to manage the systems of work in a workplace, of which only one element is the worker.

A good incident investigation goes beyond the incident to see what led up to a worker acting they way they did, the reasons behind the decision. Instead of "tell me about your childhood", OHS practitioners can legitimately ask "tell me about your sleep patterns", or

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Letters to the Editor

If you have any safety issues to discuss, or concerns about SafetyWeek itself, please consider communicating with the Editor through natadmin@sia.org.au

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“tell me about your second job”, or “tell me about your relationship with your partner”, as these can be contributory factors to the decision made on the day or the work environment at the time of the incident.

Some recent AAP articles provide interesting examples of the different contexts in which fatigue as a workplace issue can manifest:

“Ambulance Employees Australia (AEA) said weary paramedics had fallen asleep at the wheel and administered wrong drugs because they did not have enough time off between shifts.

They have called for a minimum 10-hour break between shifts, compared with eight hours under the current award.

But Ambulance Victoria has said the fatigue issue was one of 175 union claims, which it said sought \$800 million from pay talks.” (<http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/latest/5517243/ambos-warn-strike-action-fatigue/>)

“Investigators examining the near-catastrophe at Melbourne Airport last month are exploring whether fatigue was a factor after being told the pilot had barely slept the day before the flight.

Emirates pilots are permitted to fly a maximum of 100 hours each 28 days and the pilot was also almost at the legal threshold of the number of hours he was able to fly.

Emirates has issued a statement saying safety was a top priority for the airline.” (<http://www.smh.com.au/travel/travel-news/pilot-barely-slept-day-before-emirates-neardisaster-20090427-ajtb.html>)

A higher priority than a good night's sleep apparently! Clearly it is the spread of hours that is the issue not the total over a fixed period.

Both these examples relate to workers' interactions with the public and reflect the complexity of OHS's spread to public safety.

It seems that every investigation now automatically assesses the fatigue level, or impairment, of the participants in incidents in the same way mobile phone records are checked in car accidents and blood-alcohol levels or drug testing in some industrial events.

If your OHS professional does not consider psychosocial issues in developing safety management plans or incident investigation, seek a second opinion, or better yet, make sure the first opinion is comprehensive.

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