



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Website: [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

Email: [natadmin@vic.sia.org.au](mailto:natadmin@vic.sia.org.au)

Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

## QUICKSCAN

NSW emergency services have defended their "world-class" responses to routine incidents	1
New WorkCover Farm Safety Starter Guide	1
The role of women in Australian agriculture was becoming increasingly critical	2
Company put workers at "dire risk": judge	2
Information on avoiding accidents and education on preventing injuries were the keys to reducing the incidence of farm deaths around Australia	2
A woman has suffered serious head injuries at Mount Hotham ski resort in a chairlift accident	3
A roadworker was seriously injured after he was run over and dragged almost 70 metres	3
Maintenance workers at one of Brisbane's largest hospitals have walked off the job in protest at an alleged lack of electrical safety	3
An experienced police officer who had just picked up his new patrol motorcycle died when the machine hit a tree	4
Reminder On Q Fever Vaccinations	4
New Code for Call Centres	4
A 40-year-old man has died after his arm became trapped in a compost mulching machine	4
Judge rules against ex-Carlton player in injury claim	5
Victoria's footballers remain unable to access workers' compensation for injuries sustained whilst training	5
A 17 year old the boy was killed possibly when a jackhammer exploded	5
A man is in a critical condition after falling from a tall pine tree in one of two workplace accidents	5

## Emergency Services Fend Off Criticism of Responses

By David Crawshaw

July 20 2005

NSW emergency services have defended their "world-class" responses to routine incidents, despite a report raising doubts about their effectiveness.

The report, released by Auditor-General Bob Sendt, said today the public could not be sure rescue units were effective because of a lack of information about their response to incidents such as car crashes and cliff rescues.

The report said there was "insufficient information on which to offer an opinion on whether or not rescue is efficient or effective".

NSW emergency agencies lacked an "overarching rescue strategy or plan to ensure optimal service delivery", it said.

Mr Sendt said multiple agencies conducted rescue operations in Sydney - primarily police, fire brigades and ambulance - whereas other states typically had one agency in charge of rescues in metropolitan areas.

"The board is not able to assure parliament and the community that rescue services in NSW are organised to best effect and value," Mr Sendt told reporters.

The NSW government countered by saying experience showed the state's rescue workers were the best in the world and the public had nothing to fear.

"The government has absolute confidence in the retained and the professional rescue services and indeed the volunteers who are involved in rescue services in NSW," Acting Emergency Services Minister David Campbell told reporters.

"We believe we are well prepared and well served as a community by these ... people.

"The government is extremely confident in our rescue services ... (and) I've got no doubt that we are providing a very high level of service."

The government would consider the information in the auditor-general's report to continue to improve emergency services, Mr Campbell said.

NSW rescuers were "world-class" and had been named world champions in competition against their overseas counterparts three times in the past six years, he said.

State Rescue Board chairman Phil Koperberg, who is also NSW Rural Fire Services Commissioner, acknowledged there was room for improvement but dismissed as "disingenuous" media reports that emergency workers were unprepared for a terrorist

attack.

"There ought to be no suggestion taken that there is a link between this report and the state's preparedness to deal with terrorist incidents," he told reporters.

Mr Koperberg said the auditor-general's report only criticised the administrative side of emergency work.

"It doesn't call into question the effectiveness of rescue," he said.

"If we look at the book-keeping and the accounting side of it, we are not averse to taking on suggestions by the Auditor-General about the collection of data.

"But none of that in any way touches upon the suggestion that the rescue services in NSW are ineffectual - the evidence points quite to the contrary."

He was not aware of any incident in which a coroner called into question the timeliness or effectiveness of the emergency response.

Mr Koperberg rejected calls to implement mandatory incident response times, saying this was "very difficult" when many emergency workers were volunteers.

Opposition emergency spokesman Andrew Humpherson said mandatory response times should exist to ensure emergency responses could be measured against performance targets.

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,"

Continued on page 2





# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 1  
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 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](http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au)

Source: Mister for Workcover

## Women play increasingly critical role in agriculture

18/07/05

The role of women in Australian agriculture was becoming increasingly critical with women now accounting for almost a third of the total workforce, Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister Henry Palaszczuk said.

Mr Palaszczuk said the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) recognised this important role by sponsoring the Women in Business category of the Smart Women - Smart State Awards. Winners will be announced on 22 August 2005.

"The proportion employed in agriculture increased from 26 per cent to 31 per cent over the last two decades. The majority of women employed in primary industries work in agriculture, particularly in niche livestock industries, Mr Palaszczuk said.

"We have also seen an increasing number of women working with their husbands and partners to establish value-added gourmet food businesses on-farm.

"Women continue to play multiple roles on-farm as farmers, financial and business managers, mothers and as providers of valuable off-farm income."

The State Government supports and promotes the work of women in Queensland's rural industries.

DPI&F produces a regular Women in Rural Industries e-newsletter to provide the latest information about events, funding opportunities, awards and grants, workshops and much more for women in rural industries.

The July-August 2005 e-newsletter is available at [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/wiri/](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/wiri/)

Source: Minister for Primary Industries & Fisheries

## Injury prevention the key to farm safety - 2005

19 July 2005

Information on avoiding accidents and education on preventing injuries were the keys to reducing the incidence of farm deaths around Australia, the Federal Minister for Ageing, Julie Bishop, said today, during Farm Safety Week.

Ms Bishop, who also has portfolio responsibility for the National Health Priority

Continued on page 3

## Company put workers at "dire risk": judge

25 July 2005

A \$310,000 fine imposed today after a November 2001 workplace fatality at Dandenong is one of the highest yet imposed in Victoria.

Glass manufacturer Pilkington (Australia) Operations Ltd was convicted and fined on two counts under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1985).

The fine includes a \$50,000 penalty for 11 previous breaches of health and safety laws\*.

In handling down the sentence this morning, Judge Michael Bourke said an eight tonne load of glass fell from a forklift and crushed employee Hung Nguyen Huu at the company's Dandenong premises on 10 November 2001.

The Judge found that the method used to move the glass had placed Mr Huu at "dire risk" if anything went wrong.

He said that the company was obliged to apply safe equipment, methods and procedures and ensure they were followed, "They failed to do so and a man is dead."

WorkSafe's Manufacturing, Logistics and Agriculture Director, Trevor Martin, said "Tragically it's too late, the damage is done and no amount of regret will change things. The improvement work, safe systems and proper planning and supervision should all have been in place. If they had, this man would not have died.

WorkSafe's new 24-page booklet 'Forklift safety is available online at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au)

Source: WorkSafe

# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN



## 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](mailto: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.**

Continued from page 2

of injury prevention, said around 150 Australians died each year from injuries sustained in farm accidents, but deaths could be prevented if people took simple precautions and were more aware of potential problems.

"The Australian Government is contributing almost \$1.5 million over three years to the Farmsafe Australia Inc. Farm Injury Prevention Project," Ms Bishop said.

"To date the Farm Injury Prevention Project has produced a Farm Machinery Safety Plan, a Farm Workshop Safety Resource Package and a Farm Machinery Guarding Resource Package.

"Farm work can be hazardous, and often help during an emergency is not close at hand," Ms Bishop said. "It is important that we do everything we can to help people avoid preventable injuries. Becoming more aware of the dangers is an important first step.

"These practical plans and tools are available to rural communities at field days and through Farmsafe affiliates and partners, such as farm machinery dealers, health services, work-health and safety authorities. They are also available on the Farmsafe website at [www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au)."

A range of Community Service Announcements on child safety are being screened in some states during Farm Safety Week, and will be supported by a further six Community Service Announcements in the future. These aim to raise awareness of some important farm safety matters and easily preventable injuries.

Future plans for the Farm Injury Prevention Project include dedicated injury prevention strategies for older workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. Community-led programs will be conducted in each state to improve local farm machinery safety. They will be supported by a machinery guarding program and an ATV safety training program.

Source: Minister for Ageing

## Woman seriously injured in chairlift accident

July 19 2005

A woman has suffered serious head injuries at Mount Hotham ski resort in a chairlift accident being investigated by Victoria's workplace safety watchdog.

The woman, in her 20s, was knocked unconscious and was flown to the Alfred Hospital in a medically-induced coma with a fractured skull.

The Mount Hotham summit chairlift, which services beginners' runs, was shut down ahead of a WorkSafe investigation tomorrow.

WorkSafe spokesman Michael Birt said it appeared the quad-chairlift stopped suddenly around 11am (AEST) today while the woman and her partner were loading at the bottom of the lift.

"She's been thrown sideways and hit the arch of the chair," he said.

Mr Birt said it was not yet clear if the woman had been injured by the chair or if she fell.

The woman's partner also fell from the chairlift, but was not injured, he said.

Rural Ambulance spokeswoman Jess Li said the woman suffered serious head injuries including a fractured skull.

"She was stabilised at the scene by paramedics and airlifted to the Alfred (Hospital)," she said.

WorkSafe will tomorrow investigate what caused the accident, including the reason for the sudden stop.

"It could be mechanical, it could be someone has hit the emergency stop, it could be ice, there are any number of possible causes," Mr Birt said.

"That is why we are keen to try to determine what has happened so if there are issues that need to be addressed we can share that with the industry." AAP

## Truck drags man 70m along road

July 19 2005

A roadworker was seriously injured after he was run over and dragged almost 70 metres south-east of Melbourne today.

The man, a 51-year-old from Werribee, was setting up traffic management equipment in Berwick just before 7am when he was hit.

WorkSafe spokesman Michael Birt said the truck was towing a trailer and was on the site to collect power poles being removed in the works.

"The trailer collected him and dragged him along, and then the trailer has run over him," he said.

The man was flown to the Alfred Hospital with serious injuries. AAP

## Hospital workers protest electrical safety

20 July 2005

Maintenance workers at one of Brisbane's largest hospitals have walked off the job in protest at an alleged lack of electrical safety.

Continued on page 4



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 3

The strike follows an audit's findings that the Princess Alexandra Hospital failed to meet minimum sterilisation and electrical safety standards.

The hospital has been put on notice to fix the problems in 60 days or risk losing its national accreditation through the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

Queensland Opposition leader Lawrence Springborg says the employees met for a combined union meeting before walking off the job at about 1 pm (AEST).

Union manager Deb Podbury says the strike won't stop the safe delivery of hospital services. AAP

## Police Officer dies after picking up new patrol motorcycle

July 19 2005

An experienced police officer who had just picked up his new patrol motorcycle died when the machine hit a tree in central Queensland today.

Traffic Branch Senior Constable Christopher Barwise, 50, died when his motorcycle left the road and hit the tree at Sarina, south of Mackay, about 12.40pm (AEST), police believe.

Constable Barwise and another officer were returning to their Cairns Traffic Branch base from Brisbane with their new motorcycles when the accident occurred.

"Another police motorcyclist was riding in front of him," a police spokesman said.

"When the other officer noticed Senior Constable Barwise was not following him, he turned around and found the officer at the accident scene.

"It is believed the officer was already deceased."

Family and friends of Constable Barwise, a police officer for 18 years, were receiving support, police said. AAP

## Reminder On Q Fever Vaccinations

July 20, 2005

Workers in the livestock industry and other occupations that involve handling animals have been reminded that they may need to be vaccinated against the potentially deadly disease Q Fever.

All workers in high-risk industries need to be screened, and must be vaccinated if they are not immune to the disease.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that a number of Q Fever infections had recently been reported, and a reminder was required.

"There have recently been reports of Q Fever infections in abattoir workers, dairy farmers and shearing contractors, and WorkSafe inspectors will be conducting compliance checks in the high-risk industries," Ms Lyhne said.

Q Fever is a zoonosis (a disease that can be transmitted from animals to humans) that can lead to hospitalisation and even death.

The employees most at risk are abattoir workers, farmers, shearers, tanners and stock transport workers, as well as veterinarians and zoo employees.

The disease is most frequently transmitted via inhalation of airborne bacteria and – less commonly – through direct contact with infected animals and materials.

Symptoms can appear similar to the flu, including high fever, profuse sweating, extreme fatigue and muscle and joint pain.

A percentage of cases lead to the highly incapacitating post-Q Fever Fatigue Syndrome, which has been known to last for several years.

The screening process and vaccine are readily available from specifically trained medical practitioners, listed on the Australian Q Fever Register website at [www.qfever.org](http://www.qfever.org).

At-risk workers are provided with a zoonosis card that should be carried to prove either that they have been vaccinated or are immune to Q Fever.

"Employers have a duty of care under the occupational safety and health legislation to provide employees with a safe working environment," Ms Lyhne said.

"This includes protecting employees from potentially deadly diseases by ensuring vaccination is carried out if appropriate and ensuring that a Q Fever card is provided to employees.

"WorkSafe inspectors in regional areas will soon be conducting an inspection project to check that employees in high-risk areas such as abattoirs, shearers, livestock transporters and pastoral station workers have been screened.

"Q Fever can kill, so I urge both employers and employees in high risk industries to ensure all at-risk workers are screened for immunity and vaccinated if not immune."

Source: Department of Consumer and Employment Protection

## New Code for Call Centres

WorkSafe WA has released a new code of practice for call centres. The Code of Practice for Occupational Safety and Health in Call Centres applies to all workplaces in Western Australia covered by the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984. It provides guidance on occupational safety and health management in call centres.

It is available for download at <http://www.safetyline.wa.gov.au/pagebin/codewswa0235.htm>

## Man dies after mulching machine accident

July 21 2005

A 40-year-old man has died after his arm became trapped in a compost mulching machine at a factory in southern NSW.

The man was working alone at Lake Albert, near Wagga Wagga, at noon (AEST) when his arm became stuck, a NSW Ambulance spokeswoman said.

He managed to use his mobile telephone to call for assistance but died at the scene.

Continued on page 5



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Editor Kevin Jones  
Editorial Inquiries +61 (0)3 9478 9484  
jonesk@safetyatwork.biz

Designer/Publisher:  
Workplace Safety Services Pty Ltd  
849 High Street, Regent VIC 3073 Australia  
A.B.N. 68 091 088 621  
www.worksafety.com.au

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Continued from page 4

The victim, who was self-employed, may have been cleaning the machine at the time of the accident, a WorkCover spokesman said.

The accident is being investigated by WorkCover.

AAP

## Judge rules against ex-Carlton player in injury claim

July 22 2005

A former Carlton player's damages action against the AFL club over an injury he claims ended his career should not go ahead, a Victorian Supreme Court judge said today.

Justice David Byrne ruled in a preliminary hearing that Adrian Whitehead was an employee entitled to payment under the Accident Compensation Act - the Workers Compensation scheme - at the time of his injury. As such he was precluded from bringing an action against the club.

The case had been fixed for trial on September 19.

Paul Henderson, a lawyer acting for Whitehead, said his client would appeal against today's ruling.

Whitehead, a 1995 premiership player, had tried to sue the club for undisclosed damages over a foot injury he says he received in the 1997 season.

The former defender claimed he was not warned he risked injury by playing after being given a pain-killing injection before a Round 20 match.

He claims he later suffered a career-ending foot injury.

The club and former club doctor Phillip Perlestein denied Whitehead's claims.

Justice Byrne said that Dr Perlestein, also a defendant in the action, had stated that Whitehead had subsequently trained and played football before sustaining a further injury in a game on March 28, 1998.

AAP

## Footballers not workers for compensation laws

22 July 2005

Victoria's footballers remain unable to access workers' compensation for injuries sustained whilst training or playing football despite a recent Court finding.

Mr Adrian Whitehead, a former footballer for the Carlton Football Club was seeking compensation in the Supreme Court for injuries he sustained during a game against Geelong in 1997.

The Court's decision handed down today was based on the law at the time which provided that employers, such as the Carlton Football Club, could be held responsible for compensating a player for injuries they sustained.

However, the laws were amended later in 1997 to remove this responsibility as it relates to sportspeople.

Under the current laws football clubs are not responsible for providing workers compensation for players injured while participating as a contestant in the sport.

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

## Teen dies in industrial accident

July 22 2005

A teenager has died in an industrial accident in central Queensland.

The 17-year-old boy was killed about 9.20pm (AEST) yesterday at Hardchrome Limited in Mackay, police said.

The business specialises in the repair and manufacture of large scale hydraulic cylinders and suspension rods for the mining and transport industries.

Media reports suggested the boy was killed when a jackhammer exploded, but police refused to elaborate.

Workplace Health and Safety officers are investigating.

AAP

## Man critical after falling from tree

July 23 2005

A man is in a critical condition after falling from a tall pine tree in one of two workplace accidents in Tasmania today.

The 38-year-old man was trying to remove the upper part of the tree with a chainsaw when he fell about four metres and was knocked unconscious shortly after 12.30pm (AEST) in Runnymede, north east of Hobart.

He was airlifted to Royal Hobart Hospital and remained unconscious and in a critical condition late this afternoon.

In a second accident, shortly before 2pm, a teenage girl fell from a tractor being driven by her father on a farm in Moriarty, near Devonport.

The girl, 14, suffered leg injuries and was taken to Mersey Community Hospital.

Police said Work Place Standards had been advised of both accidents.

AAP