



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Website: www.sia.org.au

Email: natadmin@vic.sia.org.au

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Agreement on New Industry Safety Plans

26 August 2005

The NSW Workplace Safety Summit has concluded in Orange today with employers, union leaders, occupational health and safety experts agreeing to new industry safety plans.

Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca, said the new action plans were designed to make safety as simple as possible, further reduce injuries in the workplace and save lives.

"The plans cover nine industry sectors and identify workplace issues which need to be tackled to achieve the agreed target of a 40 percent reduction in workplace fatalities and a 20 percent decrease in workplace injury by 2012," Mr Della Bosca said.

The industry areas and priority safety issues included:

- Construction – hearing loss, manual handling and safe design
- Rural (including agriculture and forestry) – hazardous chemicals, slips, trips and falls and plant & equipment
- Health and community services – manual handling and improved education about Occupational, Health and Safety issues
- Government – psychological injuries, manual handling and greater sharing of safety information across agencies
- Mining and utilities – muscular skeletal injuries and manual handling and contractor safety.
- Manufacturing – manual handling, noise reduction and outworkers
- Retail and Wholesale – manual handling, falls and traffic management
- Transport – fatigue and noise exposure
- Consumer and business services – manual handling and violence

"These priority areas were identified following discussions at a number of workshops at the two-day summit attended by union and business representatives and occupational, health and safety experts," Mr Della Bosca said.

These issues will now be incorporated in action plans to be implemented across the nine sectors.

Assistant Minister for Commerce, Diane Beamer, who chaired the public sector working group, said manual handling and psychological injuries are key areas to be addressed by government agencies.

"The working group agreed on the need for improved training strategies, best practice case studies and early intervention to prevent and reduce injuries of all types," Ms Beamer said.

"NSW has the lowest level of workplace fatalities and injuries in 17 years and these plans will help that trend continue," Ms Beamer said.

The NSW Government will respond formally to the Summit's action plans by the end of the year.

Source: NSW Minister for Commerce

Note: the NSW WORKPLACE SAFETY SUMMIT 2005 "COMMUNIQUÉ" with more details of the Safety Summit is available from the Editor of this bulletin by emailing your request to jonesk@safetyatwork.biz or for download from the NSW rkcover website www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Hearings on escort services next month

August 24 2005

The Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) will hold public hearings next month into its proposed reforms of Queensland's escort industry.

CMC chair Robert Needham said the hearings were an opportunity to debate whether escort or outcall prostitution services should be legalised. "The CMC's hearing will also examine the practicalities of operating and regulating escort services, including workplace health and safety, industrial relations, business and regulatory issues," Mr Needham said.

More than 10 organisations and individuals will present their views at the hearings on September 13 and 14 at the CMC offices in Brisbane.

Earlier this month, opposition MPs and former sex industry workers gathered outside state parliament to present a petition of 20,000 signatures against reforms to Queensland sex laws.

They include CMC recommendations that some legal brothels be allowed to operate escort services and the liberalisation of on-stage acts and explicit strip shows in pubs. AAP

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Labor slams guidelines for F-111 compo payments

August 24 2005

Labor today slammed guidelines for payment of compensation to former RAAF F-111 maintenance workers, describing them as a shambles that should be revised immediately.

Opposition defence personnel spokesman Mark Bishop said the guidelines were arbitrary in the extreme and would result in major unfairness, inconsistency and chaos for years.

Senator Bishop said Labor believed RAAF F-111 ground crew and others affected in the deseal-reseal program should be awarded a lump sum, commensurate with their actual physical and mental disability with that reviewable over time. He said the lump sum also needed to be increased.

"Guidelines on eligibility for the F-111 deseal/reseal lump sum payments are a shambles and must be revised immediately," he said in a statement. "For example, the distinction between exposure for 10-29 days (\$10,000), and 30 plus days (\$40,000) is crudely devised and ignores long term health effects which are the only fair measure of exposure."

The government announced on Friday that lump sums would be paid to hundreds of former maintenance workers exposed to toxic chemicals while working for the RAAF at Amberley air base, south-west of Brisbane.

A major study found the RAAF personnel and contractors suffered ill health from exposure to toxic chemicals while working on desealing and resealing of F-111 fuel tanks between 1977 and 2000.

Senator Bishop said the guidelines for compensation failed in many areas. He said many would fail the 30 day test who might have experienced more intense exposure than those who satisfied it.

"The state of their health should be accepted as the prima facie evidence," he said. "What is the difference between 29 days and 30 days exposure - answer \$30,000. No provision is made for civilians or public servants employed on the project prior to 11 November 1991. Exposure for less than 10 days is not provided. No provision is made for widows or deceased estates for any death before September 8, 2001, regardless of up to 40 reported deaths resulting from exposure commencing 30 years ago."

AAP

Safety Guide targets asbestos in vehicle repair industry

21 August 2005

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca, today released a new WorkCover Guide to assist employers and employees in the automotive repair industry to work safely with asbestos.

"Brake pads containing asbestos were sold in Australia until the end of 2003, when they were finally banned Australia-wide," Mr Della Bosca said.

The new guide, "Working with asbestos in the motor vehicle repair industry", emphasizes that great care must be taken when working on brakes, clutch linings and high temperature gaskets in all types of motor vehicles.

"It is essential that the risk of exposure to asbestos during repairs is eliminated or, where this is unrealistic, controlled as much as possible."

Brake friction components previously contained chrysotile asbestos – a hazardous substance and known human carcinogen.

The Minister warned that a large number of brake friction components containing asbestos fitted to vehicles prior to 31 December 2003 continued to pose a danger.

"Identifying these components in some vehicles can be difficult, as there may be no identifying marks, service records, or supplier details," he said. "If you are unsure whether components contain asbestos, it's essential to err on the side of caution, and to remove and dispose of them safely."

"Employers should ensure that their workers always apply adequate control measures when removing this material," said the Minister. "All employers in NSW have an obligation to identify foreseeable hazards that may arise in the workplace, and to assess, eliminate or control any risks or hazards. This includes the risk of exposure to asbestos."

Working with asbestos in the motor vehicle repair industry details the necessary steps to carry out risk assessments, workplace monitoring, health surveillance, and practical methods of controlling the risk of exposure to asbestos.

"The Guide is one of a series of five developed specifically for the motor vehicle repair industry," said the Minister. "Work procedures where asbestos may be encountered are clearly outlined, including brake assembly, clutch and heat shield

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New Code of Practice on Containers

WorkCover NSW has released a code of practice for the Safety Aspects in the Design of Bulk Solids Containers including Silos, Field Bins and Chaser Bins.

It provides practical guidance on safety aspects of the design of all types of bulk solids storage containers above 4 tonne or 4 cubic metre capacity and is available for download at http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/756EBFFA-CC2B-4605-9DA2-915AA59482F0/0/cop_safety_aspects_design_bulk_solids_containers_0011.pdf

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Recent versions of Acrobat Reader are available as a FREE download at

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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 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.

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repairs and the removal of cylinder heads, exhaust gaskets, brake linings and clutch facings," he said.

The four additional motor vehicle industry guides are:

- Managing the risk of slips, trips and falls
- Managing the use of plant
- Managing the use of hazardous substances
- Managing the risk of sprains and strains

These guides, and further information relating to the use of asbestos, are available from the WorkCover website www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

Source: NSW Minister for Commerce

Fire in conveyor assembly

August 20 2005

At 8.55 PM on 19th August 2005 the Triabunna brigade responded to a monitored alarm at Gunns Limited, Freestone Point Road.

On arrival the brigade located a conveyor belt system on fire. Initially fire fighting effects were hampered by the high voltage power supply and fumes from the burning conveyor belt.

Minor damage was sustained to the conveyor belt. No injuries were reported. A damage estimate will be known later after further investigation by assessors.

The Tasmania Fire service fire scene examiner investigated the fire this morning. Whilst investigations continue, any deliberate cause has been ruled out. Source:

Tasmanian Fire Service

NSW workplace injuries and fatalities at record low

23 August 2005

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca, today announced that work-related death and injuries had dropped to their lowest levels since the state's workers compensation scheme began in 1987.

"One death in the workplace is one too many, but the good news is that fatalities and injuries are continuing to decline," Mr Della Bosca said.

"The incidence of workplace injuries has been reducing for the past 10 years, and is now at its lowest rate of 13.6 injuries per 1,000 employees."

The release of the 2003/04 NSW Workers Compensation Statistical Bulletin has come ahead of this week's NSW Workplace Safety Summit in Orange. More than 250 representatives of business, unions, government and occupational health and safety experts will gather to work on new strategies to further reduce injuries and fatalities.

"It will give great encouragement to this group, knowing that we are on the right track," Mr Della Bosca said.

The Minister said time lost due to work-related injuries had also dropped by nine per cent over the previous year.

"Of the 132 work-related fatalities reported, 39 resulted from workplace injuries and 27 from occupational diseases, while 40 – the largest number – occurred as people travelled to and from work," he said.

"There are many factors contributing to the improving trend in NSW, including a positive and co-operative safety culture from both employers and employees; a world-leading occupational health and safety framework; the nation's best resourced workplace health and safety body and a series of effective workplace safety campaigns.

"It's an excellent trend for the state's employers and for everyone in the workplace.

"WorkCover NSW has the nation's largest and most active team of workplace safety inspectors. It has a new Business Assistance Unit taking information and advice to employers around the state and it has programs to improve occupational

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health and safety in construction, farming, transport, small business and community services," Mr Della Bosca said.

"The most effective way to reduce the physical and financial costs of workplace injury is to avoid them entirely – and this data shows NSW employers and employees understand that safety message and are putting it into practice.

"These results have moved us closer to achieving the Government's target of reducing workplace injury and illness by 20 per cent and fatalities by 10 per cent by 2007."

Source: NSW Minister of Commerce

Northam Roadblocks Catch Lawbreakers

August 26, 2005

A WorkSafe roadblock exercise in Northam last week has exposed many interstate transport companies that are not complying with fatigue safety laws.

The joint roadblock exercise led by WorkSafe and involving officers from six government agencies found that some transport companies are still not complying with the State's fatigue safety laws.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that it was disappointing to note that eastern states transport companies appeared to be complying with the laws to a lesser extent than their WA counterparts.

"We undertook a roadblock exercise last month in Broome and Port Hedland that looked at transport companies plying the north-south route, and we were relatively happy with the level of compliance in that area," Ms Lyhne said.

"But this latest roadblock has resulted in the issue of no less than 25 prohibition notices, most of which directed the driver to have a period of seven continuous hours of non-work time before continuing their journey."

The recent roadblock involved officers from WorkSafe, WA Police, Main Roads, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, Roadwise and the Merredin Branch of the State Emergency Services, with the agencies looking at issues under their jurisdiction and the SES providing support services.

Transport South Australia Inspectors stopped vehicles at Ceduna in SA and WA Police stopped vehicles at the WA/SA border, and both provided details to WorkSafe inspectors at Northam.

A total of 263 trucks were stopped again at Northam, and checks made of the times and distances travelled to ascertain whether they were taking the proper rest breaks and had an appropriate Fatigue Management Plan in place.

The 25 prohibition notices were issued against drivers who were not in compliance with requirements for rest and other provisions of the fatigue regulations, and inspectors will conduct follow-up investigations of 67 transport operators.

Prohibition Notices are issued when an inspector sees a serious and imminent danger to employees, and the activity must then cease until the hazard no longer exists.

A comprehensive Code of Practice for the management of fatigue has been in operation in WA since 1998, and regulations governing fatigue management for commercial vehicle drivers have been in place since July 2003, when an updated Code of Practice was also released.

Source: WorkSafe WA

Chemical spill at Melbourne hotel

August 25 2005

About 100 people were evacuated from a hotel in central Melbourne today following a chemical spill.

Fire crews were called to the Grand Hyatt in Collins Street about 3.25pm (AEST) after reports that about 2.5 litres of amyl acetate had been spilled in a drain on the sixth floor, a Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) spokesman said.

The combination of the chemical and water gave off a pungent odour, forcing the evacuation, he said.

Firefighters wearing splash suits and breathing apparatus poured detergent down the drain to flush out any remaining fumes.

EPA and WorkCover officers attended the scene while firefighters had the spill cleared in 40 minutes, the MFB spokesman said.

A Metropolitan Ambulance spokesman said paramedics attended but there were no injuries.

AAP

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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.safetyatwork.biz

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