



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

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## Man's Jacket Conducts 30k Volts of Static Electricity

September 16 2005

A Victorian man conducted 30,000 volts of static electricity in his jacket but walked away without a scratch.

Frank Clewer, from Dennington in the state's southwest, left a trail of burned carpet and molten plastic through the nearby city of Warrambool.

Authorities later tested his polarfleece jacket using a device that measures static electricity and said the dial initially went off the scale before settling on a figure greater than 30,000 volts.

Mr Clewer's wife Margaret said her husband first heard a loud crack while inside a Warrambool community employment centre, thinking a fire cracker had gone off outside.

"He said he went in for his interview and they could smell this terrible burning smell and, not realising it was Frank, they called the fire brigade."

Fire authorities evacuated three buildings and began cutting into the carpet at the employment centre yesterday afternoon, believing wires in the ground were on fire. "But there was no wires there, and the carpet wasn't scorched on the underside - just on the surface," Warrambool Country Fire Authority leading fire fighter Troy Cleverley said. "While we were there you could still hear cracking and electrical popping noises. I've just never seen anything like it. Imagine a room of four or five firefighters, two electricians and an electrical inspector all standing around scratching their heads."

Mr Clewer solved the mystery after he returned to his car and noticed the plastic on the floor had melted. "As he got out of the car there was this loud bang again, and that was when he realised it was him," Mrs Clewer said. Mr Clewer was left with just a small scorch mark hole in his jeans. Mrs Clewer added: "He never felt a thing. He's very very lucky. It's lucky he wasn't a shopper or he would have burned down half of Warrambool."

"The CFA fellows had to check all the clothes, and then when he took the jacket off it was still generating electricity. It is bizarre. It is unbelievable really," she said.

Mr Cleverley said Mr Clewer was not injured because the electricity had very low amperage. "Everywhere he had walked in the building he had left a burn mark," he said. "Every two steps there was a burn mark in the carpet. In my experience, I haven't heard about anyone carrying that much charge to be able to scorch carpet - let alone not being able to feel it."

AAP

### Just relax" is not the answer to stress

"Ask a person under extreme stress to 'just relax', and you might just have to stand back to avoid the explosion," said an Australian stress expert ahead of her address to The Safety Conference.

A stressful day at work is leaving Australians with more than just a headache – the average length of stress leave is more than 16 weeks. Surprisingly and perhaps reassuringly, simply taking time out to relax is not the answer, according to Conference speaker, Diana Killen.

"In the aftermath of the exclamation, you might hear them screech: 'Who's got time for that?'" she said.

Macquarie Institute's Diana Killen specialises in training people to deal with pressure without stress and is one of almost 100 expert speakers who will address an expected 1000 delegates at the Safety Conference. Hosted by the Safety Institute of Australia and sponsored by WorkCover NSW, The Safety Conference will run from October 26-28 in Sydney.

Growing research shows relaxation is not sustainable at workplaces filled with the pressure of deadlines, office politics and customers, according to Ms Killen. Instead, emotional management training was the key to dealing with the pressures of everyday working life.

"Ask a person under extreme stress to 'just relax', and you might have to stand back to avoid the explosion," Ms Killen said. "You might hear them exclaim, ' Who's got the time for that?'"

Ms Killen says that stone-age biology is at the heart of workplace stress, beginning with the most basic fight or flight response triggered by the brain's emotional centre, the amygdala.

"Priming us to flee at the sight of a sabre tooth tiger, this part of the brain works about 80,000 times faster than the cortex, or 'smart' part of the brain," she explained, "so we are reacting faster than we can think."

This ancient 'fight or flight' response also dampens higher brain function, affecting the ability to make rational decisions. In the long term, people could get 'stuck' and finding themselves unable to see a way out of the situation, choose to do nothing. "We're not thinking straight, we just don't know what to do and rather than addressing it, we start

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looking for somewhere to lay the blame," Ms Killen said.

Aside from clouding our thinking, research linked the stress response to serious conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, cancer and heart disease.

Dealing with stress is not as simple as taking a break either, given the daily doses of stress suffered by many workers. A US study showed that the immune system could take up to six hours to return to normal after a five-minute burst of anger.

"Until recently, it was thought that it was okay to put up with 'normal stress' as long as you got some rest when you needed it and took a holiday once in a while," Ms Killen said.

"The problem is though, when under stress, we don't make good decisions and may not be able to tell we need a break. When we do get a break, are we reversing the effects of stress on our health and wellbeing or are we just catching our breath long enough so we can go back and do it to ourselves again? Besides, attempts at relaxation, with the concerns still playing heavily on your mind, could simply shift you from a state of anxiety to boredom, apathy or even depression."

Source: Firefly Marketing

## ACT WorkCover to Target Certification

1 September 2005

ACT WorkCover is targeting occupations that require a Certificate of Competency under the (Certification of Plant Users and Operators) Regulation 2000 (the Regulation) in the first of four targeted safety focus campaigns to be run over the next 12 months. A Certificate of Competency is a license required to operate plant and machinery such as forklifts and cranes or to erect scaffolding.

"The safety focus campaigns are a new initiative of ACT WorkCover and this is the first of four campaigns that will target specific areas of safety over the next year," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said. Breaches of the Regulation identified since the current campaign commenced have resulted in Infringement Notices being issued to two companies and an individual, resulting in fines of up to \$1000.

"Both companies that have been fined allowed workers to operate plant without a Certificate of Competency, in one case an elevated work platform and the other, a materials hoist," Mr Janssen said.

The erection of scaffolding on ACT construction sites will come under particular scrutiny.

"ACT WorkCover regularly receives reports over the installation, use and maintenance of scaffolding on ACT construction sites," Mr Janssen said.

Key issues include positioning, overloading, stability and safe access to the scaffold

platform. Other issues include the operation of plant and machinery near scaffold, safe distance from power lines and incomplete scaffolding.

"ACT WorkCover has written to scaffolding companies in the ACT to organise a suitable time for Inspectors to visit as well as to inform them of the particular issues Inspectors will be focussing on during the inspection," Mr Janssen said.

Inspectors will also be checking to ensure that workers have Certificates of Competency if they are operating, cranes, forklifts, excavators, backhoes, or other plant.

"Plant operators and their employers should ensure they have a certificate of competency for the work they undertake or face the risk of fines," Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT WorkCover

## Healthwise Cancer Report finds no link to the Alcoa refinery

9 September 2005

An independent study requested by the Western Australian Department of Health has found no increase in the cancer rates in workers at Alcoa's Kwinana alumina refinery.

The Healthwise report is part of an ongoing study of current and former Alcoa Australia employees conducted by independent researchers from Monash University and the University of Western Australia. It was funded by Alcoa in response to community concerns about possible cancer links.

The Department of Health's Divisional Director, Health Protection Group, Dr Andy Robertson said the report was an important study, which examined the health of Alcoa workers at the Kwinana refinery.

The findings followed two previous Healthwise reports, which compared cancer rates in Western Australian and Victorian Alcoa workers, workers at Wagerup, Pinjarra and Kwinana refineries, and specific groups of workers in mining and refinery operations and in administrative functions.

Last year, an expert working group, convened by the Department of Health, requested that further work be carried out to investigate cancer rates in employees working in certain parts of Alcoa's Kwinana refinery - buildings K58, K59 and Building 150, where calcination and liquor burning operations are carried out.

This latest report has analysed the cancer rates in a large group of past and present Kwinana employees including those who have worked in these particular buildings.

Dr Robertson said the report used data from the Western Australian Cancer

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## Conferences

First International Conference on Road Traffic Accident which will be held on 21-22 December at Tehran University campus for more information go to [www.ut.ac.ir/tac2005](http://www.ut.ac.ir/tac2005)

The 6th Nordic Safe Community Conference Karlstad, Sweden, 9-11 November 2005 More information is available at [www.srv.se/nscc](http://www.srv.se/nscc)

## Adobe Acrobat V7 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 25 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 7.03 please email me at [jonesk@sia.org.au](mailto: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 with Norton Antivirus before distribution.

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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](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.**

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Registry and investigated cancers diagnosed from 1983 to 2003 and covered 2475 past and present Alcoa workers.

"When all cancers were considered, fewer cases of cancer were observed in all the Kwinana workers compared with the overall WA population, but this difference was not significant," he said.

"In addition, the report showed that for those employees who had worked in building K58, K59 and Building 150, there were similarly lower levels of all cancers than expected."

The report also showed that when specific types of cancer, such as stomach, lung and kidney cancers were analysed, levels in Alcoa workers were generally lower than might have been expected in the general population.

This latest report provides reassurance to the Department of Health, to the community and particularly to Alcoa employees that cancer rates are not elevated through occupational exposure at the Kwinana refinery. Source: WA Department of Health

### Storeman injured in forklift rollover

September 15 2005

A storeman was seriously injured when his forklift rolled on him at a warehouse in Melbourne's north-west today.

The man, in his late 20s, was driving the forklift at a warehouse in Annandale Road, Tullamarine, when it tipped and rolled about 7am (AEST) today, a Metropolitan Ambulance Service spokeswoman said.

"His co-workers helped free him. He was caught underneath but he was free when paramedics arrived," the spokeswoman said.

According to WorkSafe the three-tonne forklift is thought to have struck a roof beam causing it to tip sideways around 7:15 am. The 28-year-old male operator was struck by the machine.

He was taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital with severe head and chest injuries and is in a serious condition. AAP

### New measures to protect security guards

September 14 2005

Victoria's cash-in-transit security guards will get better protective gear as part of new safety standards following the fatal shooting of an officer.

The shooting of Erwin Kastenberger during a suburban shopping centre robbery in March sparked a review of procedures for workers who transport, deliver or collect

cash and other valuables.

Under new measures announced today, security guards will be given better training and improved personal protection gear. As well, their vans will be upgraded with better security, including engine immobilisers and bullet-proof protection. New guidelines for building design to reduce the risk of robbery have also been set.

Transport Workers Union Victorian secretary Bill Noonan said there had been "enormous emotion, frustration and anger" among security guards over the fatal shooting.

But Mr Kastenberger's death had also been a wake-up call for the industry, Mr Noonan said. "They think about the work that they do," Mr Noonan told reporters. "The dangers associated with it and the fact that they just go about doing ... the vital work they do without a lot of regard for their own safety at times."

Mr Noonan described the new measures as "Erwin Kastenberger's legacy". "We're able to say that his death leaves something behind relative to the safety of his workmates," he said. "We've got to have a look at the hazards. We've got to assess the risks and we've got to make it as safe as we possibly can."

WorkCover Minister John Lenders said security guards were frontline workers who were exposed to risks, such as armed robbery and assault, that many people never faced. "Which is why it is important that workplace safety standards are assessed and updated to ensure they remain effective," he said. "Security guards are also susceptible to physical injuries like fractures, cuts, open wounds as well as stress."

The new measures will be explained to employers over the next month after which WorkSafe inspectors will check for compliance. Failure to comply with the new standards could be used as evidence in a WorkSafe prosecution. AAP

### Katie's Cleaning Services needs to clean up its act

September 15, 2005

Katie's Cleaning Services Pty Ltd, of Delahey, was convicted in the Sunshine Magistrates' Court today for making late WorkCover payments to an injured worker, on 11 occasions, and under paying that worker on six occasions.

The worker, a cleaner, injured her right arm in May 2002. Katie's Cleaning Services Pty Ltd was responsible for making payments to the worker while she was injured.

The delay in payments occurred between July 2002 and March 2004.

Magistrate John Doherty said the matter went on for quite a while and wasted no

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time in convicting Katie's Cleaning Services Pty Ltd, imposing a fine of \$750.

WorkCover's Executive Director – Rehabilitation and Compensation, Len Boehm, said this was an important conviction in protecting the rights of injured workers.

"This conviction demonstrates that employers have a legal and moral obligation to injured workers," Mr Boehm said. Dealing with an injury creates its own pressure. Not receiving the correct entitlements can compound that pressure and delay an injured worker's recovery. Injured workers, like employers, also face many financial commitments. And receiving their correct entitlements at the right time is central to allowing them to meet those commitments."

Source: Workcover

## If it's large, bulky and awkward, it may be an OHS problem

14 September 2005

Handling of large, bulky and awkward loads is the subject of WorkSafe's new guidance booklet, 'A guide to the handling of large awkward or bulky items'.

The 39 page booklet sets out practical ways to eliminate or reduce the risks of manual handling injuries.

WorkSafe's manufacturing, logistics and agriculture program director, Trevor Martin said risk assessment was essential to reduce the risk of injuries. "There are about 340 claims each year as a result of this type of manual handling."

Apart from the effects on the injured worker, they cost the employer-funded workplace insurance scheme about \$6-million. Mr Martin said although the guide was aimed at loads exceeding 25kg or having a dimension of more than 500mm, it had applications for less heavy and smaller loads.

"If loads can't be repackaged or redesigned, the use of mechanical means of moving them will greatly reduce the risk of injury."

The guidance booklet can be used by employers and workers in the warehouse and logistics area, shipping container dispatchers, labour hire services, retail and storage sectors.

Copies of the booklet can be obtained by calling WorkSafe publications on 9641-1333 or on the internet at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au).

Source: WorkSafe

## ADVERTISEMENT

### Customised Safety Publications

Recently the publishers of **Safety At Work** magazine completed the production of a guide on manual handling for one of the fire services in Australia.

Manual handling is the major hazard for firefighters and the Brigade needed a plain English guide for the firefighters to read, follow and understand.

The guide is over 30 pages and includes



photographs of hazards and control measures of the firefighters during their daily tasks.

The control suggestions are in line with current Australia manual handling regulations and have been verified by a qualified Ergonomist.

At the launch of the guide, a WorkSafe representative said the guide was

**"fantastic, nicely presented...it makes people think through the process".**

The guide was written by an OHS Safety Practitioner in detailed consultation with Fire Brigade representatives.

If your company or industry could use a guide that includes photos of real tasks in your workplace with text and a format that your employees will understand, contact Kevin Jones of Workplace Safety Services P/L through

[www.safetyatwork.biz](http://www.safetyatwork.biz) or directly at [jonesk@safetyatwork.biz](mailto:jonesk@safetyatwork.biz)

## Fatality leads to double warning

14 September 2005

WorkSafe is investigating the death of a 50-year-old Footscray man at Braybrook in Melbourne's west on Sunday.

He was crushed between the handrails of an elevated work platform, (also known as a scissor lift) and the supports for the roof of a factory in Ashley Street Braybrook.

The death was the 13th workplace death reported to WorkSafe this year and the third involving someone working alone. At the same time last year 26 people had died in workplace incidents.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said although Victoria's workplace death rate was well-down and injury rates were dropping, the weekend incident should serve as a reminder of the need to constantly monitor work practices to minimise injury. "In cases when people are working on their own or in remote circumstances the dangers are increased. If something goes wrong there is a

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## Chain of responsibility laws to improve road safety

20 September 2005

Trucking companies are being warned they will soon face substantial penalties if they pressure truck drivers to overload their rigs or meet unreasonably delivery times.

The New South Wales government's chain of responsibility laws, which broaden the responsibility for heavy-vehicle safety compliance, come into effect on September the 30th.

Roads Minister Joe Tripodi says that under the legislation, all parties in the chain - from consignors, packers, loaders, receivers, drivers and operators - must take steps to prevent breaches of road transport mass, dimension and load-restraint laws.

Mr Tripodi says in a statement that all those with responsibility for activities that affect compliance with road transport laws can be held legally accountable and liable to substantial penalties.

He says the Roads and Traffic Authority was conducting an education campaign to inform trucking operators and the public about the new laws.

AAP RTV



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strong likelihood that you will not be found for some time. In many cases, a delay in getting help can make the difference between life and death. The fact that three of this year's 13 deaths involved people working on their own illustrates the risk. If working alone cannot be avoided, stay in touch with family or workmates and take extra care."

Mr Merritt said the incident should warn operators of elevated work platforms and other plant of the potential for tragedy. "This type of equipment is commonly used in the construction industry, manufacturing and retailing, but just because they are used routinely does not mean there should not be constant awareness of the risks.

The Australian Standards cover the use of elevated work platforms (AS 2550.10 – 1994). Manufacturers and hirers have information about their use.

What safety precautions should be taken when using an Elevating Work Platform (EWP)? Selection of an appropriate type of Elevating Work Platform (EWP) should be made following consideration of:

- type of work to be carried out.
- height and reach of the unit.
- safe working load of the unit.
- existing ground conditions.
- existence of any electrical hazards such as powerlines.

Safety precautions that should be taken include:

- operator and personnel are appropriately trained and familiar with the EWP.
- the EWP is checked for operational safety prior to use.
- the support surface for the EWP is free of penetrations and is preferably flat.
- pneumatic tyres are in good condition and free of defects.
- any travel when the platform is raised is in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- harnesses are connected and worn at all times if a boom-type EWP is used.
- do not climb in or out of the platform while the EWP is elevated.
- Persons operating boom-type EWPs with a boom length of 11 metres or more must hold, or be directly supervised by, the holder of a WorkCover Certificate of Competency (class WP) AS 2550.10 – 1994. *Source: WorkSafe*

## Second over servicing physiotherapist brings profession into disrepute

September 14, 2005

A second Melbourne physiotherapist, Mr Eden Law, has been found guilty of unprofessional conduct of a serious nature by the Physiotherapist Registration Board of Victorian (PRBV) in relation to services provided to injured workers under the WorkCover scheme.

The PRBV heard that Mr Law received \$183,648 in payments during a 12 month period for the treatment of injured workers, including four patients who received 458 treatments

between them over a 12 month period.

The PRBV found that Mr Law had provided services to injured workers that were excessive, unnecessary and not reasonably required, and in doing so bought the physiotherapy profession into disrepute.

WorkCover's Director – Rehabilitation and Medical Services, Deirdre Francis, said this was an important finding in support of the VWA's efforts to improve services to injured workers. "This is the second of four complaints we have referred to the PRBV over the past two years and forms part of the VWA's ongoing efforts to ensure injured workers receive the highest quality services," Ms Francis said. "In both cases to date, the PRBV has found that it is the professional responsibility of physiotherapists, and by extension all healthcare professionals, to justify their treatment to injured workers.

"In line with this, the VWA's Clinical Framework, which is supported by the Australian Physiotherapy Association and other health professional associations, provides the guidance for treaters of injured workers to justify their treatment.

"Inappropriate and unjustified treatment impacts negatively on the worker's ability to recover from their injuries and return to work and can further impact upon the workplace, the employer and the costs to the WorkCover scheme."

The VWA, in partnership with Australian Physiotherapy Association and the physiotherapy profession, has made significant ground in the last two years promoting benchmark treatment expectations.

However, Ms Francis said that the VWA will continue to refer healthcare providers to the relevant professional body for review if the VWA found concerns about the adequacy, appropriateness or frequency of treatment to injured workers. *Source: WorkCover*

## Call For Public Submissions About Violence Against Women At Work

September 14, 2005

The Minister for Women's Affairs, Mary Delahunty, today called on Victorians to have their say on workplace violence against women.

The Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Violence Against Women in the Workplace commissioned a research report that found 62 per cent of women had experienced some form of violence over the past five years. This violence ranged from swearing to physical attacks.

"Violence in all its forms is unacceptable and the Committee is now seeking written submissions from Victorians about what can be done to reduce the violence that women experience at work," Ms Delahunty said. "The findings of the research and details about the consultation process are available from the Office of Women's Policy web site at <http://www.women.vic.gov.au> or by calling Information Victoria on 1300 366 356. Written submissions close on Friday, November 11.

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