



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Coordinated Demolition and Asbestos Campaign

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February 1, 2006

Workplace safety and health authorities across Australia and New Zealand have launched a coordinated campaign to focus on the safety of demolition work and associated asbestos removal.

The campaign has two phases – an education phase, which has already been undertaken, and an enforcement phase, which was launched jointly around the country today.

In WA, WorkSafe's construction inspectors have been working in cooperation with industry associations such as the Demolition Contractors Association, Housing Industry Association, Master Builders Association and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) to make the industry aware of requirements under the occupational safety and health laws.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that the inspection program was expected to take around six weeks to complete. "Inspectors will visit around 260 residential and commercial demolition sites across Australia to check on how demolition and asbestos work is being managed," Ms Lyhne said.

WorkSafe Victoria's Executive Director, John Merritt said the exposure of any worker or member of the public to risks from unsafe demolition work was a concern for all safety authorities.

"Employers engaged in demolition work have the same legal duty as other employers to provide a safe workplace, not just for workers, but members of the public. By taking a coordinated national approach to demolition work, we want to drive home the message that workplace safety authorities are serious about ensuring employers and employees meet their health and safety responsibilities. Inspectors will check to ensure contractors have identified and controlled demolition and asbestos-related hazards and risks.

Issues which contractors will need to have addressed include:

- site security
- public protection
- traffic management
- hazardous substances control (such as asbestos and lead)
- working at height
- adequate supervision
- structural stability

Mr Merritt said, "We are not expecting high levels of non-compliance; however when it is identified, we will not hesitate to enforce the law."

The New Zealand Labour Minister Ruth Dyson said today, "We know this campaign is necessary because around 100 workers each year die as a result of occupational injury in New Zealand. This initiative contributes to the strategy's second outcome - encouraging preventative workplace cultures and ensuring workers participate effectively in processes for improving workplace health and safety."

NZ Department of Labour inspectors will visit at least 40 demolition sites between now and 31 March to ensure that employers understand how to manage asbestos and demolition risks, and to raise compliance levels. The campaign aims to improve safety for workers, the public and the environment and reflects the government's strong commitment to health and safety.

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Vehicle Hoists Safety Concerns

1 February 2006

A safety audit by ACT WorkCover Inspectors in December on the operation of two and four post vehicle hoists in almost 70 mechanical workshops in the ACT has revealed a concerning lack of compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989 (the Act). The majority of businesses operating vehicle hoists were found to be in breach of safety regulations.

“The audit revealed serious safety issues, including a lack of safety locks to prevent the rapid descent of hoists during unexpected failure, a lack of locking mechanisms on vehicle supporting arms, missing or damaged wheel stops on four-post hoists to prevent vehicles rolling off and lack of safety guarding,” ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

ACT WorkCover is currently investigating an incident involving a two-post vehicle hoist that fell over while a vehicle was being lifted, with the fall only being arrested by the webbing of the roof truss.

“There have been a number of vehicle hoist failures in the ACT in recent years and the safety audit revealed inadequacies in keeping maintenance records, a lack of operating instructions and manuals and safe work loads not being properly identified”, Mr Janssen said.

“328 safety notices and compliance agreements were issued to 66 businesses operating vehicle hoists, with the majority being Improvement Notices directly relating to vehicle hoist safety breaches”, Mr Janssen said.

Source:ACT Workcover

Early registration urged for suicide prevention conference

January 26 2006

The Queensland Government is encouraging early registration for a landmark suicide and self harm prevention conference in March.

The Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, Warren Pitt, said the Queensland Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Conference: Sharing learnings from practice and research forum was a vital part of the Government’s five-year Suicide Prevention Strategy that aims to reduce suicide and attempted suicide rates.

“The Department of Communities undertakes a range of initiatives, including early-intervention projects under that strategy,” Mr Pitt said. “Suicide is not only a tragic waste of life but also has a devastating and lasting impact on those left behind. We know the risk of suicide and self-harm is unacceptably high in some groups in our community such as Indigenous people, young people and older men. The Government and the community have a joint responsibility to work together to help reduce the rates and impacts of suicide and self-harm. This conference is a significant part of that responsibility.”

The conference will be held at the Mercure Hotel in Brisbane on 30-31 March 2006 and will focus on:

- Information for working directly with people who are suicidal or self-harming;
- Approaches to detection, assessment, early intervention, treatment, prevention and bereavement after suicide;
- Factors which contribute to suicide and self-harm; and
- How communities can work together to coordinate and evaluate prevention efforts.

Registrations close on 17 March.

For more information, email spconference@communities.qld.gov.au or phone tollfree 1800 177 338. The conference program is available online at: http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/community/suicide_prevention/conference_details.html

Source: Communities and Disability Services and Seniors




**Safety Institute of Australia (Inc.)
Victoria Division and Freehills presents**

AN EARLY MORNING SEMINAR

OHS Legislation

Are you up to date with the changes in OHS Legislation for 2006?

This Breakfast networking seminar is aimed at keeping Safety Professionals and Industry Representatives abreast of new and impending changes in OHS legislation as well as current and emergent issues for Victorian businesses.

Speakers: **Sia Lagos** WorkSafe Victoria
Barry Sherriff Partner of Freehills

The following topics that may be discussed include:

- Consultation and other Practical Issues
- The OHS Act 2004 – Implementation to date

Why not join us in this informative session to network with old friends and make new friends!!

VENUE: Freehills
101 Collins Street,
Melbourne

WHEN: Tuesday 14th February 2006
Registration: 7.00am
Start: 7.30am
Finish: 9.00am

COST: Includes light buffet breakfast
SIA Members: \$ 50.00
Non Members: \$ 70.00
(please note: all prices include GST)

If you have not yet booked a place in the SIA’s February Breakfast, please do it as soon as you can by downloading the registration form from [SIA Events](#) or you can contact the SIA Secretariat for further information. Seats are limited and this annual breakfast is always well-attended so please book early.

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Gov't pays tribute to Waterfall victims three years on

SYDNEY, January 31 2006

The NSW government paid tribute today to the victims of the Waterfall train crash on the third anniversary of the disaster, while promising to further improve rail safety.

Seven people were killed and 42 injured when a four-carriage Tangara bound for Port Kembla derailed near Waterfall station, south of Sydney, on January 31, 2003.

The crash happened after the train's "dead-man" emergency brake failed to activate when the driver, Herman Zeides, suffered a heart attack, an inquiry found.

A damning report into the accident found NSW rail authorities had known of faults in the dead-man brake system but had not acted on those concerns.

The disaster prompted the government to introduced new safety measures on Sydney's train network, although these were later blamed for reducing service reliability.

Emergency Services Minister Tony Kelly paid tribute to the crash victims and rescue workers who helped retrieve the injured.

"Today we pay our respects to the seven people who were killed near Waterfall station," he said today in a statement. Our thoughts are also with the passengers who survived but were injured in the derailment, and the brave emergency services personnel who went to their aid."

Mr Kelly said the government was serious about improving safety on Sydney's trains and was implementing the inquiry's 114 recommendations.

"Safety on the NSW rail network will remain this government's top priority - the travelling public of NSW and our transport workers deserve no less," he said. "That is why the government committed \$250 million to implementing the first stage of the Waterfall recommendations. We also implemented an independent quarterly review of progress in addressing the recommendations." AAP

Delahunty calls for better work/family balance

MELBOURNE, February 1 2006

On the 150th Anniversary of the eight-hour day this year, workers are still struggling to balance work and family time, Victorian Women's Affairs Minister Mary Delahunty says.

Ms Delahunty today said increasing numbers of employees were clocking up 50-hour weeks, making it difficult for working parents to balance school pick-ups, shopping, housework and childcare.

"More people are complaining about the pressures this balancing act creates," she said.

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed 1.7 million Australians worked 50 hours or more weekly in 2002, twice as many as in 1982, she said. "Working time is still a major source of tension and conflict and the casualisation of the work force provides little security for families."

Ms Delahunty said women especially were affected by the "double shift" of work and childcare, with 56 per cent of Australian women participating in the workforce. One third of those women were also caring for children, she said. AAP

New Hearing For Unique Asbestos Case

CANBERRA, February 2 2006

A former Wittenoom miner who developed chronic anxiety that he faces death from asbestos-related disease after the deaths of dozens of his workmates is determined to continue his 12-year battle for justice.

The High Court of Australia, sitting in Canberra, today ruled on

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Council worker's legs crushed

HOBART, January 31 2006

A Tasmanian council worker is in hospital after being run over by a tractor driven by one of his colleagues.

He was rushed to the Royal Hobart Hospital this morning with crushed legs, a police spokeswoman said.

The men, believed to be employed by Derwent Valley Council, had been working at Sorell Creek on the Lyell Highway.

The Workplace Standards Authority is investigating. AAP

Roadworker killed in south Sydney

SYDNEY, February 3 2006

A roadworker was killed when he was hit by a truck as he carried out maintenance work with several other workers when it is believed a construction vehicle has struck the man.

Emergency services attended however the man has died at the scene from his injuries.

The WorkCover Authority as well as the Crash Investigation officers have examined the scene and will investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. Source: NSW Police



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an appeal by CSR whose subsidiary Micalco operated the infamous Wittenoom asbestos mine. The High Court decision effectively sends Arturo Della Maddalena's long-running case back to the District Court of Western Australia for a re-trial.

Slater & Gordon lawyer Tim Hammond, who specialises in representing victims of asbestos related disease, says that the decision of the Court was somewhat expected and does not represent a defeat for Mr Della Maddalena.

"Mr Della Maddalena has had an extremely difficult time. He is now one of only a few of his countrymen who made the journey from Italy to work in Wittenoom and have not succumbed to the deadly dust," Mr Hammond said. "He is determined to see this through".

"The High Court today decided that there were some errors in the methodology applied by the Western Australian Court of Appeal and they felt the best remedy was a re-trial. It continues to astound me the lengths that corporate Australia will go to avoid meeting their liabilities to asbestos victims and it is regrettable that CSR has spent so much time and money defending this case. You would have thought that CSR would have learned some lessons from the destructive, expensive and ultimately counter-productive legal attacks it made on asbestos victims in the 1980s. But not even the recent James Hardie fiasco appears to have given them pause for thought.

Mr Della Maddalena's original legal action against CSR and its subsidiary Micalco began in 1994 but was dismissed by the Perth District Court in 2002. The Court heard that a 2002 investigation of 39 of Mr Della Maddalena's former Wittenoom friends and workmates found only three survivors. Asbestos-related disease had killed 36, 14 of them from his hometown in Italy, including his brother and cousin.

In October 2004 the Full Bench of the WA Court of Appeal overturned that decision and found that Mr Della Maddalena has a psychiatric injury caused by exposure to asbestos, and that the injury was caused by the negligence of the defendants. His case is believed to be the first in Australia of a solely psychiatric injury being caused by exposure to asbestos – without the presence of a physical asbestos-related injury.

Source: Slater & Gordon

HSU Calls for Penalties on Aged Care Homes

FEDERAL, January 21 2006

The Health Services Union (HSU) has called on the Howard Government to immediately penalise 105 Victorian aged care homes after they failed to comply with new fire regulations.

Aged care facilities across Australia were given until 31st December 2005 to implement the new federal fire safety standards introduced by the Howard Government in 1999. Federal Department of Health and Ageing figures show that as of the 20th January, 105 Victorian nursing homes have still not met the upgrades.

This is despite being given six years, \$3,500 per resident in tax payer funding and a two year extension to meet the standards which include improvements to sprinklers, fire doors and alarms.

Mr Jeff Jackson, State Secretary for the Health Services Union called on the Howard Government to heavily penalise all Victorian homes that have failed to implement the new standards by the 2005 deadline. "Not one cent of new funding should go to these homes until they deliver on their safety responsibilities," Mr Jackson said. "Families deserve to know that in the event of a fire, nursing homes are readily equipped to protect their frail and elderly loved ones. This is just a tragedy waiting to happen." Source: HSU

Safety Audit for the Café Industry

ACT, 24 January 2006

ACT WorkCover Inspectors will be visiting cafes across the ACT over the next few weeks as part of a safety audit and inspection program within the hospitality industry. Over 70 cafes in town centres such as Civic, Woden, Belconnen and Tuggeranong, and suburban shopping centres such as Dickson, Manuka and Kingston, will be inspected during the program.

**Powerlines
would have
been barely
visible to
pilot: police**

PARKES, NSW, February 2 2006

Powerlines that brought down a helicopter in the NSW central west, killing all three on board, would have been barely visible to the pilot, police said today.

Two Parkes Shire Council employees and a helicopter contractor from Cootamundra died instantly when the Bell Jetranger hit the powerlines and exploded on impact beside the Orange Road, 23km east of Parkes, about 9.30am (AEDT) today.

The helicopter was carrying out a weed survey flight in a small wooded valley when it struck high-tension lines 50 metres above the valley.

AAP

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“Over 200 workers compensation claims are accepted by insurers from workers in cafes and restaurants in the ACT each year, and many of these injuries could be prevented through improved safety practices,” ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

The aim of the audit is to promote awareness of health and safety in the sector and ensure that employers are meeting their obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989. “Inspectors will be looking for evidence that businesses are using risk assessment systems, have manual handling procedures in place, have a satisfactory level of safety training and that injuries and dangerous occurrences are being reported,” Mr Janssen said.

Common general hazards in the hospitality industry include long hours and shift work, angry and abusive customers, wet floors and high noise levels.

Key hazards associated with the café industry include slips, trips and falls and manual handling injuries such as muscular stress from lifting, carrying or putting objects down.

“Kitchens have the greatest number of potentially dangerous hazards and Inspectors will be checking for hazards associated with hot surfaces, working with slicing equipment and sharp objects such as knives.” Mr Janssen said.

Source: ACT Workcover

TWU wants cab safety review

SYDNEY, February 2 2006

The Transport Workers' Union (TWU) is asking the NSW government for an urgent review of taxi design and cab safety following the brutal bashing killing of a Sydney taxi driver.

Two 14-year-old girls have been charged with murdering Sydney taxi driver Youbert Hormozi who was found beaten and lying on a road at Canley Heights, in Sydney's south-west, on Tuesday. He died on the way to Liverpool Hospital.

Another taxi driver was bashed and robbed overnight by two passengers who turned on him in Sydney's south-east.

The TWU said it would meet with the NSW Department of Transport today to discuss taxi driver safety. “We'll be seeking a review of taxi design to determine whether security screens have been effective and how they can be improved,” TWU NSW secretary Tony Sheldon said. “We'll also talk about installing cameras in every cab (and) we'll ask the Department of Transport to urgently convene a safety committee including the police, the Transport Workers' Union and WorkCover to determine how to respond to this recent spate of assaults. The public's safety, as well as the safety of the cab drivers, can't be jeopardised.”

AAP

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 20 megabytes - a substantial burden to dial-up internet connections.

Safety At Work publishers are now allowed to distribute the latest edition of Acrobat Reader on a CD. If you want a copy of Acrobat Reader 7.00 please email me at jonesk@sia.org.au and include your full postal address. A CD will be mailed to you shortly after.

The CD won't be pretty as it is a burnt copy of the software that Adobe permits us to distribute. It is not allowed to be given to anyone other than the person requesting the CD and all CDs will be checked for viruses before distribution.

For those readers who are unconcerned about download limits, the latest version of Acrobat Reader is available for free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

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