



# SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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 National Office: PO Box 2078, GLADSTONE PARK Victoria 3043  
 Website: [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

Issue 39 February 20 2006  
 ISSN 1832-6714  
 Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

## Rail Workers Get Strict Drug/Alcohol Testing

February 19 2006

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RailCorp has detected no increase in the number of employees under the influence of drugs or alcohol, despite scores of workers returning positive tests, NSW Transport Minister John Watkins says.

Mr Watkins said figures showing 92 rail workers tested positive to drugs and 65 were drunk on the job must be seen in perspective.

The figures were compiled from drug tests on 4,998 railway workers from April 2004 to December 2005, and 54,474 workers who were tested for alcohol from October 2003.

Mr Watkins said RailCorp oversaw an onerous drug and alcohol testing regime put in place to ensure the rail system was as safe as possible. "RailCorp does randomly test RailCorp employees from the chief executive down and it also undertakes after an or any incident," Mr Watkins said.

"The union even acknowledges how strict it is.

"A comparison of last year's results showed there was no increase in the rate of positive drug and alcohol tests returned across the workforce. AAP

### Injuries on the rise for new Tasmanian workers

14 February 2006

Figures released today by the Workplace Safe Campaign show 2,706 new Tasmanian workers were injured in the 2004-2005 financial year, with 112 of these injuries occurring in their first week at work.

Chief Inspector of Industry and Workplace Safe campaign spokesperson, Don Schofield, said these figures were worrying as they represented an increase of 243 workplace injuries from the previous financial year and called for extra vigilance among Tasmanian workers and employers in order to bring down the injury toll.

"The most common injuries reported by new workers in 2004-05 were soft tissue injuries due to trauma (1,129), followed by lacerations or open wounds (501) and contusions such as bruising or superficial crushing (260)," Mr Schofield said.

"The average cost of a workplace injury for new workers was \$6,822."

Mr Schofield said many new workers are also young workers, with new statistics showing that 1,981 young Tasmanian workers were injured in the 2004-2005 financial year.

"Both employers and workers need to make a specific effort to ensure their workplaces are safe and healthy," he said.

"I strongly urge all employers to take a look around their workplaces, identify any hazards that could cause injury, illness or even death, and then take action to reduce or eliminate those risks.

"New and young workers will be nervous, excited and eager to impress. They are also inexperienced and likely to be unaware of what can hurt them in a workplace. They might also be reluctant to ask questions or raise any concerns they might have about workplace health and safety.

"All of these factors can put them, their co-workers and other new workers at a greater risk of suffering injury or illness at work, which is why it is essential that all new workers receive proper induction, information, training and supervision."

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A new and young workers safety information kit titled **Welcome to the Workplace: A Health and Safety Kit for Employers and their New Workers**, is available for both workers and employers.

The kit is designed to help employers provide the information that their new workers need. It consists of two guides, one specifically for employers and one for new workers.

"We encourage all managers or supervisors welcoming and training new workers to obtain a copy of the kit and to also get enough copies of the new workers guide to distribute to each new worker," Mr Schofield said.

The new workers kit is available free-of-charge by calling the Helpline on 1300 366 322 or by emailing [wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au](mailto:wstinfo@dier.tas.gov.au). For more information visit [www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au](http://www.workplacesafe.tas.gov.au).

## Sleep deprived young drivers at risk

February 15 2006

A busy lifestyle is being blamed for a high number of young Victorian drivers getting behind the wheel of a car while they are sleep deprived.

New research by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (RACV) has found 43 per cent of 400 surveyed drivers aged between 18 and 25 admitted to driving a car while they were tired.

RACV general manager of Public Policy, Ken Ogden, said the results were alarming.

"Ten per cent of young drivers admitted that in the last fortnight they went for 24 hours without sleep and then drove the car," Dr Ogden said.

"A third admitted that they nearly crashed their car because they were tired," he said.

Dr Ogden said young drivers were often trying to maintain a frenetic lifestyle, which included study, work and socialising.

"The young drivers said they had busy lifestyles and unstructured social lives, and valued the flexibility driving offered them, but they often compensated for extra demands on their time by sacrificing sleep," he said.

Dr Ogden said tired young drivers posed a high safety risk to themselves and others on the road.

"Despite realising they were tired they did not feel motivated to change their behaviour to reduce the risk," he said.

"Young drivers seem to think they are invincible."

He said young drivers were often not aware of the symptoms of sleep deprivation, but he said they were easy to identify.

"Your eyes are getting heavy, you might start yawning and you may not remember where you have been in the last half hour."

The survey also found 37 per cent of young drivers had driven between 2am and 5am, when they would normally be asleep.

The results of the study have prompted the RACV to launch "Don't Drive Tired" - a campaign targeting young drivers - which will run on FM radio and in street press.

There were also special events planned for university campuses across the state.

The RACV said young drivers could take measures to combat sleep deprivation, including avoiding driving at times when they normally would be asleep and catching a cab or public transport instead of driving tired.

AAP

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## Safety In Action 2006 - Offshore Petroleum

By **Ray Wells, CPMSIA**

The Offshore Petroleum Industry stream addresses the management of safety in the offshore petroleum industry. There are papers from persons representing the offshore operators, contractor companies, the workforce and government. The papers also cover not only drilling and production activities, but also essential support activities such as marine and aviation.

**Paul Finnigan**, Team Leader and Deputy CEO of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority will open the stream by presenting a paper describing the first year of NOPSA's operations following its start-up on 1 January 2005. NOPSA is a Commonwealth Government Statutory Authority with responsibility for administering and enforcing the applicable OHS legislation on all of Australia's offshore petroleum activities, whether in Commonwealth waters or State / Territory offshore waters. This is a diverse and geographically spread industry with strong international links, that requires an approach to regulation and enforcement that differs from that of the wider Australian workforce. More information on NOPSA may be found at [www.nopsa.gov.au](http://www.nopsa.gov.au).

**Kranstan Bradley**, Safety and Personnel Supervisor for Nabors Drilling International Ltd will make a presentation on hazard analysis and risk control for platform drilling activities. Nabors owns and staffs a number of pre-fabricated, platform-mounted drilling rigs, which are deployed at oil production platforms that are owned and operated by others, offshore Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere. This presents challenges of integration of the equipment, personnel and management

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## Aust Post defends injury policy

13 February 2006

Australia Post has defended its policy of using a specially chosen panel of doctors .. to decide when injured workers are capable of getting back on the job.

The union says the nominated doctors only rule six per cent of workers unfit .. but when workers see their own family GP .. they're declared unfit 95 per cent of the time.

Australia Post human resources manager Rod McDonald told a Senate estimates hearing today the figures show the program's successful.

He says system uses doctors who understand the Australia Post workplace .. and what sort of duties people might be able to do.

Australia Post has had major problems with lost work time in the past and has spent almost 1.5 million dollars over the past two years on eight thousand GP consultations for its workers. AAP RTV

## Electrical Safety Targeted Following Injuries

10 February 2006

ACT WorkCover is targeting electrical safety in the third of four targeted safety focus campaigns this financial year following a spate of injury reports involving electrical shocks.

"Over the past 6 months ACT WorkCover has investigated a number of incidents involving electrical shocks, including a landscaper receiving an electrical shock when driving a star picket into the earth, a teachers aid receiving an electrical shock from a school laptop computer, a maintenance worker receiving a shock while drilling and a worker receiving a shock from a faulty food warmer switch," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1989, there is a general duty to provide a safe workplace and to meet this obligation it is necessary to ensure that the risk of injury from electric shock for all people at the workplace is reduced as far as is reasonably practicable.

"Failure to maintain electrical equipment in a safe condition, or failure to use equipment in accordance with manufacturer's instructions may result in injury or death to workers or other parties," Mr Janssen said

Inspectors will be looking for evidence that businesses are using risk assessment systems, are testing and tagging equipment, keeping maintenance logbooks, that flexible electrical cords are within the maximum length according to the Amp rating and devices that have more than two outlets have an overload mechanism.

"Any equipment that may be unsafe should be withdrawn immediately from service and be labelled, warning against further use. Arrangements should be made for such equipment to be disposed of, destroyed, or repaired by an authorised repair agent or competent person," Mr Janssen said.

Proceedings are also currently underway in the Magistrates Court over the electrocution of a construction worker in 2003," Mr Janssen said

The campaign on electrical safety will run through until the end of March.

Source: ACT Workcover

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systems of Nabors and its clients, and the Nabors' approach to hazard analysis and risk control reflects this.

**Mark Lowman** is QHSE Manager for Technip Oceania Pty Ltd. Technip is a marine contractor, providing marine support and construction services to the offshore petroleum industry. Mark's paper will consider the difficulties of working in this high risk environment, the importance of planning for safety, and the role of supervisors in the management of safety offshore.

**Phil Harrick** is HSE Manager of Upstream Petroleum Pty Ltd. Upstream Petroleum is an Australian integrated oil & gas service provider. It is the day-to-day operator of the Crystal Ocean "mini" floating production storage and offloading facility located at the Anzon Australia Basker Manta field in Bass Strait. Phil will review how Upstream's integrated management system has been implemented at the Crystal Ocean.

**Jed Hart** is CEO of Hart Aviation Services. Worldwide, helicopters provide the primary means of crew transfer to and from offshore petroleum facilities. Annually there are over 10 million passenger flights, and up to 30 accidents and 50 fatalities, many attributable to human factors. The paper will address the mitigating strategies that can be drawn from the airline industries and the wider petroleum industry, for rigorous application in Australia.

At any time, the majority of personnel working in Australia offshore petroleum industry are not direct oil company staff but are engaged through contract and sub-contract arrangements. **Rod Gardiner's** paper will considers the strategies required for effective management of contractor workforces in the industry, including issues such as safety leadership, performance incentives and behavioural based safety.

**Gavin Merriman** is an OHS Consultant at Australian Workers Union, a Union that has a strong

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## Mulcahy Raises Concerns About Workers' Compensation in ACT

16 February 2006

The Shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Richard Mulcahy MLA, will today speak in the Legislative Assembly in support for the Workers' Compensation Amendment Bill 2005 (No2) but has also raised concerns and proposed a crucial amendment.

Mr Mulcahy will introduce an amendment to the Bill seeking to remove any union representative as an "authorised person" to inspect certificates of currency for compulsory insurance policies held by an employer with an insurer.

"Whilst the Opposition supports the Bill and its goal of simplifying and clarifying compensation and employee insurance issues, the Bill as it stands makes information contained in certificates of currency available to union officials. This will entrench the problem of union right of entry to a workplace.

"The issue of union right of entry is a matter to which employer and business organisations object.

"Under the Bill union officials will be able to gain the status of "authorised person" to get hold of details of whom is employed, the basis of employment, how much they are paid and whether they are members of a union.

"This is information that most employees would consider confidential and I believe that the legislation should protect this privacy and information - not make it freely available to union officials.

"This is a clear example of the Government having caved in to its union paymasters. The Government should not be so partisan.

"In the interests of fair and impartial governance I hope that the ACT Government will stand up to union backers and support the amendment," Mr Mulcahy said.

Source: Canberra Liberals

## Return To Work Key Element Of Model

16 February 2006

Encouraging a return to work for injured workers is the key element of an injury management model being developed by the WorkCover Tasmania Board.

Key stakeholders were briefed today about progress in the development of the model.

The Minister for Infrastructure, Energy and Resources, Bryan Green, said the Tasmanian Return to Work & Injury Management Model aimed to deliver better health and return to work outcomes for injured workers as well as lower costs to employers and the workers compensation system.

"Improved communication and accountability are key features, with a strong emphasis on early intervention, mediation and a safe return to work," Mr Green said.

"The model is designed to directly benefit Tasmanian workers by improving and streamlining the process of rehabilitation and injury management.

"There will also be indirect benefits generated by a process that encourages and supports early intervention and improved results for injured workers."

Mr Green said the WorkCover Tasmania Board was developing the model through intensive consultation with stakeholders involved in the management of workplace injury and illness in Tasmania.

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representation amongst the offshore workforce. Gavin, with the assistance of some offshore Health and Safety Representatives, will conduct a discussion on the role of the HSR, and the increasing demands being placed upon them in an environment where there are new OHS laws, new IR laws and new training requirements.

The session will end with two further presentations by NOPSA Team Leaders Ted Kirkbride and Simon Schubach. Their presentations will describe the two National Programs that NOPSA has put in place for 2006 – Lifting Operations and Facility Integrity. Lifting Operations are one of the most common causes of injuries and fatalities at offshore facilities, whilst facility integrity is an increasingly important aspect of the control of major accident events as the offshore infrastructure ages. These National Programs are intended to survey operators, identify best practice and role this out to the industry as a whole.

More information of the Safety In Action conference is available through [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au) or [www.safetyinaction.org.au](http://www.safetyinaction.org.au)



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"Today's briefing marks the start of the final stage of a comprehensive consultative process, with the WorkCover Tasmania Board now seeking additional input from stakeholders in order to further develop and refine the model.

"The State Government is looking at the whole system in a proactive way, including injury management, workers compensation and workplace health and safety," Mr Green said.

Some aspects of the injury management model are expected to be included in amendments to the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act to be introduced in the first half of this year.

Other proposed amendments to the Act include:

- removing barriers to workers suffering industrial deafness;
- improving compensation benefits for workers with significant injuries;
- clarifying employer obligations in respect of workers compensation insurance and increasing penalties for non-compliance;
- establishing mediation processes for resolving disputes about treatment and rehabilitation;
- simplifying the process for determining weekly compensation; and
- clarifying coverage for certain classes of workers.

The State Government is also undertaking a major review to improve the Workplace Health and Safety Act. Mr Steve Hyam, former General Manager Workplace Standards, is undertaking the review.

"The current legislation has been in place for a decade and during that time the workplace casualty rate has fallen by about 40% - but better protection for workers is needed in view of the changing nature of employment arrangements and new and emerging health issues," Mr Green said.

Source: Minister for Infrastructure, Energy and Resources

## Aust defence force being sued following soldier heat death

16 February 2006

The Australian Defence Force is being sued after a soldier died while training in extreme heat in the Northern Territory.

The 25-year-old Tasmanian trooper .. Angus Lawrence .. was completing a course in scorching heat at Mt Bunday in 2004 .. when he died of acute heat stress in 2004.

Federal workers compensation agency .. Comcare .. has launched legal action in the Federal Court .. claiming the ADF breached occupational health and safety laws by conducting the training.

The matter is listed for directions hearing in the Federal Court in Canberra on March 30. AAP RTV

### Adobe Acrobat V7.07 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 7.07 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 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>

SIA Safety At Work Bulletin  
Issue 39, February 20, 2006  
ISSN 1832-6714

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Designer/Publisher:  
Workplace Safety Services Pty Ltd  
849 High Street, Regent VIC 3073 Australia  
A.B.N. 68 091 088 621  
[www.safetyatwork.biz](http://www.safetyatwork.biz)

This weekly news bulletin is produced on behalf of the Safety Institute of Australia (Victoria Division) by Workplace Safety Services P/L.

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