



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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A Big Week on Asbestos and Smoking

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Asbestos scare at Melbourne building site

MELBOURNE, March 10 2006

A building alert has been issued to the construction industry after asbestos was found in imported wall panels on a Melbourne building site.

The potentially lethal material was found at a semi-constructed restaurant building site in suburban Glen Waverley. The find has prompted the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) to call for a national investigation into the importation of building materials.

The union says a member suspected asbestos in the imported materials and reported it to the CFMEU. The manufacturer's safety brochure was written in Chinese but claimed the product was 100 per cent asbestos free.

"We have spent the past 20 years, at great cost, ensuring homes, buildings, hospitals and schools are asbestos free," CFMEU state secretary Martin Kingham said. "This discovery renews all concerns about asbestos contamination in building materials." AAP

Rail workers to be examined after asbestos find at station

SYDNEY, March 8 2006

The NSW government has another asbestos-contamination problem on its hands, after the deadly building fibre was disturbed at a Sydney train station.

Premier Morris Iemma today confirmed contractors last week disturbed asbestos fibres in the booking office at suburban Eastwood Station, in Liberal MP Andrew Tink's electorate of Epping.

Defence and emergency services workers who took part in anti-terrorist exercises at the Holsworthy Army base will undergo health checks after asbestos was discovered there.

Last week, it was revealed asbestos had been removed from 215 NSW government schools and a further 16 schools were undergoing remediation.

Mr Iemma today said investigations were under way into the discovery of asbestos at Eastwood Station last Thursday.

"I'm advised that all work by the contractor who originally disturbed the asbestos has been stopped," he told parliament. "RailCorp will be giving medical examinations to all staff who were potentially exposed to asbestos at Eastwood Station, as well as counselling if required." AAP

SIA ACT DIVISION PRESENTATION

"How the Scheme is influencing and impacting on Australian Government Agencies and the Construction Industry"

Ms Terasa Cremer, Director Accreditation Scheme, Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner

DATE: Wednesday, 22nd March 2006
 TIME: 5.30pm to 7.30pm

VENUE: National Press Club, National Circuit, Barton

RSVP: Fred Lehman on flehmann@tpg.com.au or Willi Harley on willi.harley@dewr.gov.au
 BY: COB, Tuesday 14th March 2005

COST: \$20.00
 Finger Foods with a drink on arrival (Further drinks can be purchased from the bar)

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Safety Checks On Demolition And Asbestos

CANBERRA March 7 2006

Workplace health and safety authorities across Australia and New Zealand have launched a joint campaign focusing on the safety of demolition work and asbestos removal.

"Demolition work, and asbestos removal in particular, present specific occupational health and safety hazards and this proactive campaign is aimed at raising safety standards and preventing potential injuries on a nationally consistent basis," ACT WorkCover Commissioner/CEO Erich Janssen said.

Increasing community awareness of asbestos in the ACT's built environment and improving the management of asbestos in residential and commercial buildings – including during demolition - has been an important focus in the ACT over the past year and the national campaign will compliment this.

"Inspections will be underway throughout March and include 12 single and two storey residential sites and commercial demolition sites identified from details contained in development applications," Mr Janssen said.

A total of 216 sites will be visited in Australia and 40 in New Zealand throughout the campaign and compliance data collected will enable each state and territory to assess its demolition industry's performance against national and interstate data.

"Inspectors will be checking on the preparation and implementation of demolition work plans, compliance with Australian Standards and the ACT Code of Practice on safe demolition, as well as asbestos removal, site security, signage and traffic management," Mr Janssen said.

Further information on demolition can be obtained from the ACT WorkCover website at http://www.workcover.act.gov.au/pdfs/guides_cop/safe_demolition_work_cop.pdf. Information on asbestos management can be obtained from <http://www.asbestos.act.gov.au/>

Source:ACT Workcover

New data shows some Vic workers still exposed to second-hand smoke

MELBOURNE 8th March 2006

New data from The Cancer Council Victoria has revealed only 50% of warehouse and factory workers enjoy total protection from second-hand smoke at work, emphasising the importance of new Victorian tobacco reforms.

The story on the factory floor is in stark contrast to the office, where over 80% of these indoor workers have the benefit of working in a totally smokefree environment.

Director of the Cancer Council of Victoria, Professor David Hill said that exposure to second-hand smoke among indoor workers is expected to drop dramatically following last week's introduction of total smoking bans in most enclosed workplaces. "Victorian workplaces have made tremendous progress in relation to smokefree environments over the last 15 years, jumping from 33.9% having total indoor bans in 1990 to almost 75% in 2005."

"Despite the rapid increase in total smoking bans in workplaces from the late 1980s to early 1990s this figure has reached a plateau in recent years, so this legislation is essential to protect the remaining 1 in 4 Victorians who are currently exposed to the dangers of second-hand smoke in the workplace."

Professor Hill said it was important not to underestimate second-hand smoke as a workplace hazard, reminding employers and employees of workplaces yet to go smokefree that exposure is capable of causing short term

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Safety In Action 2006 - Productive Consultation

By Leo Ruschena, CFSIA

This stream looks at the newly applicable (from 1 January 2006) sections of the Victorian Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004 that relate to improved OHS consultation.

The stream is effectively in three parts to provide a complete understanding of the Act's requirements and how to apply these by managers, employees and OHS practitioners.

The first part covers the background - looking at how it came about, requirements by WorkSafe Victoria, and union and employer views on the requirements. **Professor Dennis Else** and **Leo Ruschena** review the historical context of tripartitism and consultation from before Robens to the present, to lay the groundwork to understand the current position. **Heather Baker-Goldsmith** from WorkSafe Victoria will detail the legal requirements, including the current advertising activity, guides and assistance available from WorkSafe. **Tracey Browne** from the Australian Industry Group and **Cathy Butcher** from the VTHC will put the positions of the industry partners, and we feel sure that there will be interesting discussions as they identify important issues that are currently emerging as the legislation is being implemented.

Part two looks at three case studies where consultation has been effectively used to improve workplace safety and productivity.

James Crammond will describe successful efforts within a Victorian auto parts manufacturing company that improved both safety and productivity.

Robert Thiedeke will talk about similar action in a Melbourne local government organisation. Associate **Professor Wendy Macdonald** will describe recent research that looks at the positive effect of consultation in reducing musculo-skeletal disorders. The case studies argue whether

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discomfort, serious illness or, in the event of long term exposure, even death.

Executive Director of Quit Victoria, Mr Todd Harper, said total-smoking bans in enclosed workplaces would also increase the chances of individuals successfully quitting.

“With most enclosed workplaces going smokefree last week, we would anticipate an increase in workers making quit attempts. We would encourage all workplaces to use Quit programs to ensure staff are supported in attempts to quit smoking or cope with new smoking bans.”

Mr Harper, says Quit Victoria can also support workplaces adapting to new smokefree legislation by providing expertise to assist with the development or update of smokefree workplace policies. “If your workplace requires assistance in the development of a smokefree policy or information on how to support your staff to stop smoking Quit has resources and advice to help.”

Source: The Cancer Council of Victoria

Indian coal miner buys Queensland safety system

BRISBANE March 7 2006

Queensland had opened its mining industry exports on a new front, with the sale of mine safety equipment to a major Indian mining firm, Mines Minister Henry Palaszczuk said today.

Mr Palaszczuk said the Queensland Government’s mine safety research organisation, Simtars, had won an order for its Camgas gas monitoring system from the Singareni Collieries Company Ltd (SCCL).

Camgas is an ultra-fast micro gas chromatograph for analysing complex mixes of gas. Along with specialised software, it determines the toxicity and explosive potential of gases in underground coal mines.

“These gas monitoring systems quickly detect the build-up of explosive gases and spontaneous combustion of coal providing an early warning system against a possible disaster,” Mr Palaszczuk said. Simtars had been negotiating with SCCL over the supply of a gas system for more than two years. “SCCL has placed an order for one system. This is the first Camgas system purchased by a coal mine in India,” he said.

Six of the latest Camgas systems developed by Simtars were sold to China early last year. Simtars had supplied a previous version of the system in 2001 to India’s Directorate-General of Mine Safety but that was paid for by the Australian Government under an aid program.

Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water principal scientific advisor for Simtars, Darren Brady, will travel to the SCCL site at Kothagudem in south India around May to install the system.

India is the third highest coal producing country in the world, putting out about 355 million tonnes in 2003-04.

Source: Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Water

Bouncers return positive drug tests

ADELAIDE, March 8 2006

Four South Australian bouncers have returned positive drug tests after the first round of checks under new laws.

Attorney-General Michael Atkinson said today the positive tests came from a random check on 26 crowd controllers. “Initial indications from police suggest that three of the positive samples are linked to cannabis and the other to amphetamines or heroin,” Mr Atkinson said. “It’s no surprise that drugs have turned up in the first round of testing.”

Mr Atkinson said once it was confirmed what the drugs were, the guards would be given an opportunity to explain why their licence to work in the industry should not be cancelled.

The South Australian government introduced drug testing for bouncers in a bid to crack down on violence and organised crime associated with the security and crowd control industries. Along with extensive background checks, the new laws stemmed from police concerns that up to 80 per cent of crowd controller firms in South Australia had links to outlaw bikie gangs.

AAP

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managers who want to increase their bottom line can afford NOT to consult?

Part three is also a practical exercise looking at the skills necessary to make consultation effective. Is it as simple as the talking mouths seem to suggest, or are there real skills required? **Dr Keith Jonson** will take you through a number of real case studies to draw out the essential elements of the consultation process so that you can learn to be effective, and not just waste everybody’s time.

Can you really afford to miss this stream?

Leo Ruschena

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Government To Explore Ways To Contain 'Excessive' Costs Awarded By Magistrates

CANBERRA 8 March 2006

The ACT Government is to consider establishing a scale that would guide the courts in awarding costs in criminal cases, after it was revealed that the amounts awarded in the ACT are up to 20 times higher than in other jurisdictions.

Chief Minister and Attorney General Jon Stanhope said today that a 2005 report from the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services Provision showed that since 1999-2000, the ACT had paid out the highest amount in the country per capita in costs against the police in criminal actions. In 2003-04 the amount was twice the amount paid per capita in the next highest jurisdiction, Victoria, and 20 times that paid in the lowest, Queensland.

"In recent times the Director of Public Prosecutions has written to the ACT Government expressing concern at the frequent and excessive award of costs made to defendants in the Magistrates Court," Mr Stanhope said today. "And in September last year, the Occupational Health and Safety Council recommended a review of the way in which costs are awarded. As things stand, the awarding of costs is purely discretionary and the amount is based on what the magistrate involved in the case deems 'just and reasonable'.

"The Government will explore whether the establishment of a scale, including criteria to be considered when making an award, might give greater objectivity to the process. Criteria might include such factors as whether proceedings were brought and continued in good faith."

Mr Stanhope said the issue was likely to be contentious and there were likely to be a range of quite different views from the courts, the legal profession and the DPP, particularly in relation to any proposed scale.

"I am conscious that there is unlikely to be any solution that will be welcomed by every party, but I don't think there is any doubt that we need to reform a system that exposes us to such dramatically higher awards of costs by magistrates than anywhere else in the country," Mr Stanhope said.

Source: ACT Government

SA WorkCover change brought forward

ADELAIDE March 7 2006

Employers Mutual Limited will begin managing claims from the end of this month, instead of waiting until 1 July 2006 when it is contracted to become WorkCover's sole claims agent.

As part of an orderly handover supported by WorkCover's current agents, EML will commence operations in SA from 5.00pm, 31 March 2006, when it will assume responsibility for all claims currently managed by Vero and Allianz on WorkCover's behalf. This involves responsibility for providing claims management services to about half of South Australia's injured workers and employers.

WorkCover's other claims agents, CGU and QBE, will continue to operate.

As WorkCover's sole claims agent, EML expects to cut the claims liability by up to \$100 million a year after only two years under the new contract and has made a unique offer to allocate half of any of its profits from local operations to the benefit of SA employers. Under the contract with EML, there will be a 25 per cent increase in case managers, meaning more help to assist injured workers recover and return to work sooner.

"Employers Mutual have an outstanding track record and we are confident that they will help us continue to make improvements to the workers compensation system in South Australia," said WorkCover CEO Julia Davison. "WorkCover, EML and current claims agents have been working hard to deliver the smoothest transition possible for injured workers and employers. We appreciate the willingness of all the current agents to work with us and EML on a staged transfer," Ms Davison said. "This ensures a more manageable transition for everyone and brings forward implementation of this reform."

WorkCover and EML are writing to all injured workers and their employers who currently have their claims managed by Vero and Allianz to advise them of the change.

Injured workers and employers currently with CGU and QBE will continue with those agents and do not have to do anything at this stage. EML Chief Executive for South Australia Anthony Fleetwood said "the transfer of a portion of the market will allow us to gradually build our operation and develop our people over a longer period. "Both Vero and Allianz were happy and willing to support this as an appropriate option for injured workers and employers. Their staff have been extremely supportive and co-operative and will manage claims as we progress our recruitment and training program," Mr Fleetwood said.

Ms Davison said there were significant benefits in WorkCover moving to a sole provider. "Apart from the cost savings identified in the tender process, having a sole claims agent will streamline and simplify the scheme for everyone involved; improve

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administrative efficiency and provide clear accountability – all contributing to our target of improved service delivery,” Ms Davison said. Most importantly, EML is signed up to our strategic targets and its remuneration is tightly linked to their achievement – including incentives to improve satisfaction for injured workers and employers, and reduce WorkCover’s liabilities.”

Source:Workcover Corporation

Miners unharmed by underground ordeal: St Ives

PERTH, March 10 2006

None of the nine miners trapped underground for hours after a fire at a West Australian gold mine was hurt during the ordeal.

The miners were trapped for about four hours yesterday after a remote-controlled loader caught fire at the St Ives gold mine, 74km south-east of Kambalda, in the heart of the WA Goldfields.

St Ives general manager Corey Atiyeh said the miners were rescued by an emergency response team. “At approximately 7.15pm (WST), and within four hours of the emergency commencing, all personnel were safely on surface,” Mr Atiyeh said. “There were no injuries or health effects experienced by any personnel in the mine.” He said the blaze began at 3.15pm yesterday about 350 metres below the surface.

The loader’s automatic fire suppression devices failed to put the fire out, so underground workers were sent to fresh air bases or self contained refuge chambers while smoke was extracted.

Mr Atiyeh said the incident was being investigated, but the loader would not be approached for at least 24 hours. The St Ives mine is owned by the Australian arm of South African mining giant Gold Fields.

AAP

Company fined \$100,000 for employee crushed by house

MELBOURNE, March 10 2006

A Melbourne company has been fined \$100,000 after an employee was crushed to death under a house he was restumping. Lanore Pty Ltd, trading as Superior Reblocking and Underpinning, pleaded guilty in the Melbourne County Court today to one charge under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The charge related to the death of Walid Abdul Latif, 24, a father of one week, who died on August 3, 2004, when he was crushed under a weatherboard house he was working under in suburban Maidstone. The man’s cousin, Jamil Abdul Latif was hurt in the incident. WorkSafe found the tragedy occurred after the jacks used to raise the house failed and no back-up system was in place.

Judge Joe Gullaci said the cousins were unskilled workers employed by Lanore to dig the holes for the house’s new stumps. He said that while the re-stumping industry was unregulated, common sense dictated employers should not need to be told of the obvious risks of failing to implement a secondary support system. Lanore was convicted and fined \$100,000.

AAP

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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 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>