



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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 National Office: PO Box 2078, GLADSTONE PARK Victoria 3043
 Website: www.sia.org.au Email: natadmin@vic.sia.org.au

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500 Australian Standards to be Cut

August 22, 2006

To maintain a contemporary and relevant suite of Australian Standards, Standards Australia has embarked on a project to reassess approximately 2,000 Standards across all industry sectors that are more than 10 years old.

The project, which began in January of this year, aims to identify Standards that no longer serve a purpose to industry and community. Already 542 Standards have been identified for possible withdrawal.

The project, expected to take a further six months, will be carried out in consultation with committees and stakeholders to determine the most suitable course of action for each Standard. Options will be withdrawal, reconfirmation or revision.

John Tucker, Standards Australia's CEO said changes in technology, industry and community, quality, safety and environmental expectations have meant many of the Standards developed 10 to 15 years ago may no longer be useful.

"It is our intention to provide Standards that are relevant to industry and the community, and this means looking closely at the current suite and retiring those that are past their use by date. This project will also reduce the number of Standards making it easier for users to establish which ones they need and remove any confusion.

"Already we have earmarked 542 Standards for possible withdrawal, this includes 161 Standards from the Information Technology and Communications area and 144 environmental and consumer Standards. This is part of our strategy to ensure our stakeholders, especially the users of Standards, are confident that our Standards mirror contemporary practice, are technologically up-to-date, and reflect current views on safety, quality and environmental impact" Mr Tucker said.

All the Standards identified for withdrawal, reconfirmation or revision will be listed at Standards Australia's website so the public can submit comments and have their say before the final verdict is handed down.

Around 2,000 Standards of the total 6,846 are over 10 years old. The full list of the current withdrawn Standards can be downloaded at <http://www.standards.org.au/downloads/withdrawal.pdf>

Source: Standards Australia

Canberra damaging safety and health in the workplace

August 23 2006

WA Employment Protection Minister John Bowler is concerned the Federal Government's so-called WorkChoices is inhibiting the safety of workplaces in Western Australia.

Mr Bowler this morning told delegates at the Albany WorkSafe 2006 Forum that WorkChoices had created a climate in which workers might feel that their job security was threatened by raising health and safety issues.

"I am concerned that John Howard's new laws have slashed workers rights and created an environment where people can be, and have been, sacked for no reason," the Minister said. "The threat of being shown the door for no reason means people, particularly elected safety representatives, will be reluctant to raise concerns for

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fear of being labelled a trouble maker and then dismissed. Not only have the pay, conditions, and job security of workers been attacked, but their health and safety in the workplace is under threat. The State Government will continue to do all it can to ensure that this climate of fear is not allowed to take hold in this State."

The WorkSafe Forum brought together people with an interest in occupational safety and health to update their knowledge on the latest developments in that arena.

Presented by WorkSafe, the Commission for Occupational Safety and Health and WorkCover WA, the forum included presentations from the WorkSafe WA Commissioner, WorkSafe inspectors, commission chair Tony Cooke and WorkCover.

Source: Minister for Employment Protection

Workcover Red Tape to be Slashed in Vic and NSW

28 August 2006

Victoria and NSW joined forces today to announce historic reforms in their state WorkCover systems to harmonise key areas and cut red tape.

NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca and Victorian Minister for Workcover, John Lenders said consistent rules and processes would make it easier for businesses which have operations spanning the two states.

"We believe in greater harmonisation across States, provided it's focussed on making the systems better and easier for employers and workers," Mr Lenders said.

"Our two states have a common commitment to upholding existing safety standards, while streamlining our systems and reducing complexity for employers and employees," Mr Della Bosca said.

The first issues to be tackled by the two states are:

- mutual recognition of construction induction certificates prior to implementation of the national standard.
- mutual recognition of plant and equipment
- common guidance material for business
- common forms for workers compensation claims and premiums
- common payment options for workers compensation premiums
- giving multi-state employers an effective single point of contact within their workers compensation insurance agent
- mutual recognition and alignment of training of return to work co-ordinators
- sharing advertising campaigns to improve workplace safety
- a common approach on key issues in the residential construction industry.

The Ministers said the two Governments were demonstrating that you can have greater uniformity and still preserve the integrity of the schemes and improve service standards.

"These examples demonstrate that the states employing more than half of Australia's workforce can work together to respond to business concerns," Mr Lenders said.

"We are aligning key areas to make it easier for businesses to deal with Workcover authorities and ensure that benefits and support for injured workers are protected," he said.

The Ministers have instructed their Authorities to meet on a regular basis to ensure implementation is effective and efficient and to identify additional reforms designed to reduce even further multi state employer administrative workloads. The majority of these initiatives will be implemented over the next year.

Mr Della Bosca said both State schemes were keeping downward pressure on premium rates and reducing the administrative burden for employers operating across state borders.

"The collaborative and productive approach being taken by Victoria and NSW is in stark contrast to the Commonwealth's bullying approach at the Australian Safety and Compensation Council," Mr Della Bosca said.

"NSW withdrew from this forum because of the Commonwealth's deception and its refusal to keep its word about upholding existing workplace safety standards.

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"The Commonwealth cut away the safety nets in industrial relations when it imposed the Work Choices system, and it's an approach that should not be used in occupational health and safety," Mr Della Bosca said.

"Victoria will not sit back and let the Commonwealth's ideological approach to workplaces interfere with WorkCover systems that are delivering results" Mr Lenders said.

As part of the new joint approach, NSW and Victoria have agreed to share their expertise in areas like the regulation of major hazard facilities. Some common approaches regarding safety performance audit tools and a consistent claims dispute approach in the field of state based self insurance will form part of the bi-lateral action plan.

Mr Lenders said the States' plan also protected the small business community. "Small business has made it crystal clear they don't want to be left shouldering the liabilities of the select few that transfer over to Comcare," he said. "By employers, unions and constructive regulators working together we can lower costs, reduce injuries and make workplaces safer."

Source: NSW Minister for Commerce

WorkCover to check bore water businesses

8 August 2006

WorkCover is reminding all businesses in Sydney's newly declared Botany Sands aquifer restriction zone to look after the health and safety of their employees.

WorkCover says businesses must ensure industrial bore water in the area is fit for the purpose for which it's being used.

The New South Wales government now requires all licensed industrial bore water users to test their water at least once a year .. and provide the Natural Resources and Environment and Conservation departments with the results.

WorkCover will visit businesses in coming weeks to ensure that appropriate systems are in place.

AAP

WorkSafe WA investigates death of worker

August 25, 2006

WorkSafe is investigating the death of a man at Welshpool workplace this morning.

WorkSafe told **SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN** that the man was a 41 year old fitter and machinist with Centrix Engineering. At this early stage it appears that he was electrocuted.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said any work-related death was a tragedy, and relayed her sincere condolences to the man's family.

Source: DOCEP

Blind Freddy could have seen disaster potential: Magistrate.

25 August 2006

A Coburg house re-stumping company has been convicted and fined \$45,000 on two charges after a Mitcham home fell from its stumps with three people inside.

Master Reblockers Pty Ltd pleaded guilty to two charges* laid under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and was fined \$45,000 by Ringwood Magistrate Hal Hallenstein.

The incident happened on 27 May 2005 at 5 Churinga Avenue Mitcham (pictured on the next page) when a house fell from hydraulic jacks that had been used to lift it before re-stumping.

The court heard that while Master Reblockers had overall control of the site, the re-stumping work had been sub-contracted to another company. Although no one was physically hurt, the court was told the owners, who were in the house at the time of the collapse,

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Useful Safety Tool

For sometime I have wanted a device that could give me an estimated quantity of lighting (lux up to 20,000 units), noise (between 35 – 100 dBC), temperature (-20° - 1300°C) and relative humidity (25% - 95%), well I have found it in the DT-21 Multimeter made in China.

It's not a calibrated tool, but it gives an indication, besides it fits into your pocket. The multimeter has a stack of electrical applications, which I do not use.

Gary Thexton,
gary@gthealthandsafety.com

Footnote: I may consider importing these devices.





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were traumatised by the experience.

Mr Hallenstein said it was just luck that no one was hurt and the fact that there was no physical injury was not a matter of credit to the defendant.

Magistrate Hallenstein said Master Reblockers Pty Ltd claimed to be an experienced building practitioner yet it did not see fit to provide support other than hydraulic jacks which supported the entire house which was also on a slope.

Although there was no industry-specific regulation of the re-stumping industry at that time, Mr Hallenstein said the risk of people being crushed or a house collapsing was so obvious that 'Blind Freddy' could have seen the potential for disaster.

The house had to be demolished because of the significant structural damaged caused by the collapse. Source: WorkSafe Victoria

Demolition business owner fined for lack of licence

August 24, 2006

The owner of a Mandurah demolition business has been fined \$1500 for carrying out demolition work without a licence.

Dean Baker – trading as Peel Demolition – pleaded guilty to two charges and was fined in the Perth Magistrates Court this week.

Mr Baker was charged with performing demolition work without a licence, and also with failing to ensure that a contractor he engaged to perform demolition work held the relevant licence.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that the licensing system for demolition work in WA was introduced for very good reasons.

"The licensing of demolition contractors was implemented to help ensure that the hazardous work of demolition would be performed safely," she said.

"Company owners and employers who hold demolition licences have been through an assessment process to ensure they are familiar with the safety issues and the safe work practices required for demolition work.

"In this case, the contractor engaged by Mr Baker said he had told Mr Baker that he did not hold a demolition licence, but the demolition work went ahead anyway.

"Mr Baker's own employees were also involved in the demolition work, so the result was that none of the workers were licensed, a potentially dangerous situation.

"The case serves as a reminder to anyone involved in undertaking demolition work that they need to check if the work requires a licence, as they will be leaving themselves open to prosecution if they flout the laws." Source: DOCEP

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Business Fails to Implement Effective Risk Management

Fifty per cent of Australian companies fail to implement effective risk management because they simply "tick the boxes", says Maurice Pagnozzi, Asia Pacific partner in charge of KPMG's Enterprise Risk Management Services.

He said compliance had driven risk management as a process, but risk managers needed to drive cultural change in organisations to ensure "performance value".

Mr Pagnozzi is a speaker at the Risk Management Institution of Australasia's annual conference in Melbourne in November. He will tell risk managers that "performance value" in risk management can only be achieved when risk management is part of company culture, rather than a separate process to meet regulatory obligations.

"It's happening in some Australian companies, but more need to change the mindset to drive value. Company culture is the issue. Improved business performance isn't being achieved because the focus is on compliance. Risk assessment processes are okay, but implementation of enterprise risk management (ERM) frameworks could be better.

"Companies are not considering the big picture and focusing on key risks to help reduce compliance costs," he said. "Implementing an ERM framework, which is balanced between compliance and performance, will drive better results. Knowing how to measure success is the key to continuous improvement."

Mr Pagnozzi said boards and directors had grasped the need for a strong risk management framework that linked to business strategies, but the concept was not being carried through all management levels.

"There are issues now at middle-management level. Boards have got it and directors and senior management have got it, but middle managers are not being involved or are reluctant to get involved. Driving business performance means having better informed decisions, better management consensus, a better understanding of risks across the company, consultation on cost efficiencies and a breakdown of silo activity.

"It's about having everyone understand the risks and the impact they have across the business and having emerging issues brought to the table at the right time."

Mr Pagnozzi said aligning risk management to strategic business decisions and planning processes would lead to a balanced approach with operational and financial benefits.

The challenge was to overcome the perception that risk management was another layer of bureaucracy and embed it as part of business planning and strategy setting processes.

Mr Pagnozzi said company culture, rather than regulatory compliance, was the impetus for future risk management development. "While compliance has been the kick start, change must come from within. Too many companies simply 'tick the box', so they can disclose to shareholders that they have a risk management plan in place."

RMIA's 2006 national conference is at the Melbourne Convention Centre on November 12-14.

Mr Pagnozzi will discuss findings of KPMG's study "Risk Management, Beyond Compliance" and outline strategies for risk managers to create self-driven cultures that actively and effectively manage risk to improve business performance.

The national conference features presentations by many of Australia's key risk management professionals and business leaders. For more information, go to www.rmiaconference.com. Source: RMIA





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Union OHS Training Claims Do Not Stack Up

25 August 2006

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Australia's peak council of business organisations and representative of employers on the Australian Safety and Compensation Council, today released details in the August edition of our ACCI Review of new research which rebuts union claims about the effect of WorkChoices on health and safety.

Last May, after the mining accident in Beaconsfield Tasmania, unions claimed that OHS training by unions needed to be allowed in agreements made under WorkChoices.

This claim gave the impression that union provided OHS training had been a common feature of workplace agreements between unions and employers until WorkChoices.

New research conducted by ACCI debunks this claim. ACCI has examined all 549 agreements certified by the AIRC in December 2005 (pre-WorkChoices, with 439 of them involving approximately 20 unions). Not one of these agreements included OHS training by unions. WorkChoices has made no practical change to OHS training arrangements. Before WorkChoices, OHS training in Australia generally was employer initiated or provided, and this remains the case.

The research also concludes that:

- prior to WorkChoices it was rare for a workplace agreement – even union agreements - to specify OHS training by a particular provider, and even rarer for that provider to be a union;
- WorkChoices has left intact all employer duties under OHS laws;
- unions can still reach private agreements with employers on union OHS training;
- most OHS training in Australia is delivered by private providers at the initiation of employers, not unions; and
- the level of death and injury in workplaces has declined over the very period that workplace relations regulation has encouraged direct workplace discussion of employment conditions.

Source: ACCI

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Editor Kevin Jones
Editorial Inquiries +61 (0)3 9478 9484
jonesk@sia.org.au

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Workplace Safety Services Pty Ltd
849 High Street, Regent VIC 3073 Australia
A.B.N. 68 091 088 621
www.safeyatwork.biz

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