



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

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Rail Bosses Defend Safety Amid Claims of Rise in Incidents

Sydney, September 17 2006

RailCorp has defended safety levels on NSW trains amid claims the number of crashes, fires and derailments have soared in recent years.

The NSW Opposition said the number of train safety incidents had leapt by more than 200 per cent in the past four years.

Collisions had risen by more than 300 per cent, derailments were up 200 per cent and the number of signals passed at danger climbed by 341 per cent, Opposition transport spokesman Barry O'Farrell said.

"These figures would be of concern to every commuter who catches a train on the rail network," he said in a statement.

But RailCorp insists that the states trains are safe.

RailCorp chief executive Vince Graham said the number of safety incidents had dropped by nearly 18 per cent between January and June this year compared to the previous six months.

Collisions during the period dropped 33.3 per cent, while the derailments, fires and the number of people being caught in train doors were also down.

Mr Graham criticised the Opposition for comparing safety incident data from September 2002 to June 2006, saying more incidents were taken into account now than four years ago.

"Implying that passengers are less safe on the network now than they were in 2002 is misleading," he said in a statement.

"I am committed to RailCorp progressively improving its safety systems and culture, the combined effect of which leads to an increased propensity for reporting safety incidents."

But Mr O'Farrell said based on RailCorp's own figures there had been 111 collisions, 49 derailments, almost 4,000 falls and 446 fires or explosions across the state since September 2002.

Since the government introduced its new timetable last September, the number of fires and explosions had more than doubled, compared with the previous year, he said.

"In the wake of the Glenbrook and Waterfall train disasters, the state Labor government promised a safer train network - these figures show it just hasn't happened," Mr O'Farrell said.

"These figures make a mockery of Labor claims that their slower train network is safer."

Mr Graham said with improved reliability an extra five million passengers had caught trains between September 2005 and June 2006, compared to the same period the year before.

AAP

Abattoir fined \$27,500 for unsafe workplace Perth, 11 September 2006

An abattoir near Albany has been fined \$27,500 for not providing a safe workplace after a young employee sustained serious hand injuries in a conveyor belt.

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Benale Pty Ltd – trading as Fletcher International WA – pleaded guilty and was fined in the Perth Magistrates Court last week for failing to provide a safe workplace, and by that failure causing serious harm to an employee.

In April last year, a 17-year-old employee at the abattoir had her hand and arm trapped in a conveyor belt when she put her hand on a roller bracket to support herself as she retrieved meat scraps from the floor at the end of a shift.

The conveyor belt was running, and the sleeve of the girl's company-supplied jacket caught in the belt and her hand and arm were drawn into the machinery up to the shoulder until a co-worker could locate the switch to turn the machine off.

The girl suffered crush injuries and fractures to her hand, multiple abrasions to the length of her arm and side of her body, and her palm was largely de-gloved.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today the case was yet another reminder of the need to guard the moving parts of machinery and to ensure safe work practices were in place.

"In this case, the conveyor belt was not fitted with guarding, which would have significantly reduced the likelihood of an incident such as this," Ms Lyhne said.

"Also of major concern was the fact that fellow workers did not know the location of the switch to turn off the conveyor belt, and a supervisor working some distance away had to make his way across the abattoir to turn off the machine so the girl could be freed.

"Subsequent to this incident, the employer fitted a metal guard to the end of the conveyor and also had an emergency stop button fitted and included a segment on conveyor belt safety in the company's induction program.

"Although all too late for the young girl whose hand was so badly injured, the employer has taken action to ensure nobody else at the abattoir suffers an injury of this kind.

"There are many cases where employees have had fingers or even limbs amputated after they became tangled in machinery, so the potential hazards are very real.

"It is disappointing that we still have to remind employers of the importance of machinery guarding when it has been required by occupational safety and health legislation for so long.

"Guarding is one of the easiest and most obvious means of minimising the risk of injury to machinery operators, and the cost of installing guarding is far less than the cost in human and economic terms of a serious injury to a worker." Source: DOCEP

Fireman injured en route to blaze

Hobart, September 18 2006

A Tasmanian fireman has been injured after a heavy tanker laden with water crashed on the way to a fire in the state's south.

The fireman was driving the vehicle route to New Norfolk, north-west of Hobart, at 9.25am (AEST) today when he lost control on a gravel corner, a fire service spokesman said.

His four-wheel drive tanker carrying almost 14,000 litres of water rolled into an adjacent paddock.

The fireman, in his late 60s but so far not identified, was trapped for a short time and was taken to the Royal Hobart Hospital with chest injuries, police said.

Tasmanian Fire Service Midlands District Officer Bill Burke

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OHS Survey of SIA Members

In the next few days, you will receive an email from the SIA asking for you to participate in an online survey about OHS and also about the SIA.

This survey has been commissioned by the Victorian Division of the SIA but is being conducted independently. It is intended to identify your thoughts about the status of OHS in Australia. The survey will be anonymous but is only circulated to SIA members. The email will be handled by the SIA Secretariat so that no member data is allowed out of the SIA.

The survey also asks some basic questions about your involvement with the SIA.

This survey is a national survey of SIA members and will result in national statistics which can be sorted by State if necessary.

The results of the survey will be used as discussion points for the National Executive and will also be used as the basis for publicity in support of SIA events and promotional campaigns.

All SIA members are encouraged to complete the confidential online survey so that we will be able to provide statistical statements from members to government and the media in order to indicate the level of professionalism and commitment to safety of the Safety Institute.

Kevin Jones, BA FSIA RSP(Aust)

EditorAll





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said the vehicle was beyond repair. "It's a complete write-off," he told AAP.

Workplace Standards and Tasmania Police will investigate the incident. AAP

Authorities begin testing children for blood lead levels

Mount Isa, September 15 2006

Hundreds of children in the Queensland mining town of Mount Isa will be tested for lead poisoning from next Monday amid concerns their health has been put at risk.

Queensland Health today said it would oversee a community-based childhood blood screening program to determine the risk of lead exposure following concerns over emissions from Xstrata's two Mount Isa smelters.

John Piispanen, the director of environmental health services at the Tropical Population Health Unit (TPHU), said a sample of about 400 children aged between one and four years would be tested.

"It is important to measure the blood-lead levels of young children in Mount Isa, due to Mount Isa's industry and given its location in a highly mineralised area," Mr Piispanen said.

"Evidence suggests that childhood exposure to lead can have harmful effects on intellectual development and cause behavioural problems."

Queensland Health said testing of around 500 children in 1998 did not find any cases of excess blood-lead levels.

The lead testing program ceased a year later.

However, renewed testing was ordered after a senior Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) official in June alleged the Queensland government was not undertaking necessary health controls because of commercial considerations with Xstrata mines.

A blood-lead level of less than 10 micrograms per decilitre is considered safe under current World Health Organisation (WHO) standards.

Mr Piispanen said any child with lead levels at or more than that figure would be seen by their family doctor, a paediatrician or the TPHU.

An environmental health officer would also offer to undertake an environmental audit to determine where the child was exposed to lead and to minimise future risks, he said.

Mr Piispanen said the screening program would continue until 400 children had been tested.

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He said the results, excluding the names of the children involved in the screening program, would then form the basis of a report assessing community lead exposure, which will be available to the public.

AAP

Asbestos in NSW train air-con units no risk: rail boss

Sydney, September 16 2006

Asbestos components found in the air-conditioning units of some NSW trains pose no risk to passengers, rail authority boss Vince Graham says.

Mr Graham said the bonded asbestos tape, associated with heater element mounts in the air-conditioning units on some inter-city V-set train carriages, will be removed as a precaution.

"Independent air quality testing of carriages has confirmed that air in the carriages is clear, with no airborne asbestos detected and no risk to passengers," the RailCorp chief executive said.

RailCorp has been conducting an audit of its property for asbestos and other hazardous materials since earlier this year.

Mr Graham said in a statement yesterday hazardous asbestos and lead had been found and earmarked for removal at 62 out of 300 city train stations audited so far.

About 70 stations on the CityRail network remain untested.

Staff were being informed about the potential health risks.

AAP

Unions call for jail terms for attacks on emergency workers

Melbourne, September 15 2006

The Victorian government is being urged to introduce mandatory prison terms for anyone assaulting or hindering emergency workers.

Unions for the state's police, firefighters and ambulance workers made the call today, at their annual meeting under the banner of the Emergency Services Federation (ESF).

ESF spokesman Paul Mullett said a harsher deterrent was needed to curb the rising rate of violence and disruptive behaviour targeting emergency workers.

"You're touching the very fabric of society, either assaulting or hindering or interfering with an emergency service worker," Mr Mullett told AAP today.

"(Yet) they go to scenes these days where people are prepared to interfere with them to try to get to patients, or as they are putting out fires."

Mr Mullett said the meeting's 150 delegates voted unanimously in support of a call for mandatory prison terms.

They also voted to condemn Victoria Police's senior management following its controversial move last week to disband the 30-member Armed Offenders Squad.

The matter is now before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

AAP

Workplace Hazardous Chemicals Public Comment

September 12 2006

As part of the development of the new Workplace Hazardous Chemicals Framework, the ASCC has released draft documents for public comment. They concern workplace chemicals and tilt-up construction, and can be downloaded at

<http://www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/AboutUs/PublicComment/OpenComment/>

The National President of the Safety Institute of Australia has indicated that the SIA is very likely to make a submission on this draft. Notification of the submission process will be emailed to all SIA members.

Employee fined for misleading WorkSafe inspector

Fremantle, September 18, 2006

A worker engaged by a transport company has been fined \$2000 for giving a WorkSafe inspector false or misleading information.

Allan Anthony Scari – Transport Operations Manager at Cockburn Transport – pleaded guilty and was fined in the Fremantle Magistrates Court this week for providing an inspector with information that was

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false or misleading.

On January 18 this year, Mr Scari provided a WorkSafe transport inspector with a medical certificate and examination notes for a commercial driver as evidence that he had been medically assessed as fit to drive a commercial vehicle, as required by law.

The certificate was dated June 6, 2005, but the driver had made a statement in October 2005 that he had not been asked for a medical certificate to drive trucks.

It was subsequently found that Mr Scari had changed the date on the medical certificate from January 17, 2006 to June 6, 2005 to make it appear that the driver had been medically assessed six months prior rather than just the day before.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that ensuring that drivers were medically fit to undertake their job was an important issue.

"It has to be remembered that commercial vehicle drivers are frequently in charge of a large and heavy vehicle and need to maintain concentration for extended periods of time," Ms Lyhne said. "It's important to ensure that the driver does not have any condition that could hamper their ability to control a large vehicle, as that would pose a serious threat to both the driver and other road users.

"Ensuring the fitness of drivers is an important component of the laws that govern the management of fatigue in WA, especially for drivers who travel long distances.

"In this particular case the employee was found to be fit to drive, but it is still a timely reminder of the fact that it is an offence to provide a WorkSafe inspector with an answer or information that is false or misleading.

"Regulations governing fatigue management for commercial vehicle drivers have been in place since July 2003, so we expect that all transport companies would be aware of the need for procedures such as medical checks.

"A comprehensive code of practice for the management of fatigue has been in operation in WA since 1998, and I strongly encourage every company involved in commercial vehicle transport to have a copy readily available in the workplace."

Source: DOCEP

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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.

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