



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Proudly Sponsored by the Safety Institute of Australia (Victoria Division)
 National Office: PO Box 2078, GLADSTONE PARK Victoria 3043
 Website: www.sia.org.au Email: natadmin@vic.sia.org.au

Issue 79 November 27 2006
 ISSN 1832-6714
 Supplied by SAFETY AT WORK magazine

CONTENTS

SA	<i>The Cost of Unsafe Work Systems</i>
NSW	<i>'Position, position, position' - the key to safer workplaces</i>
NSW	<i>13 people overcome by carbon monoxide fumes at courthouse</i>
QLD	<i>Inmates returned to prison after failed drug tests</i>
QLD	<i>Man killed by backhoe in Brisbane</i>
NSW	<i>State inquiry criticises federal workplace laws</i>
ACT	<i>Clean Air In Pubs And Clubs From 1 December</i>
NSW	<i>Three public hospital staff sacked over abuse or assault</i>
QLD	<i>Tough fines and jail for rogue security guards</i>
WA	<i>Fatigue roadblocks reveal continuing improvement in compliance</i>
NT	<i>Spotless P&F Pty Ltd Pleads Guilty</i>
FED	<i>Labour Law Conference in Australia</i>
ACT	<i>Two new ACT WorkCover publications</i>

The Cost of Unsafe Work Systems

23 November 2006

The risks to workers in the manufacturing and construction industries have been demonstrated once more, with three recent convictions in the South Australian Industrial Relations Court, resulting in fines totalling more than \$43,000.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the firms over unsafe work systems, following incidents that resulted in serious injuries to workers, two of whom were relatively new to their positions.

All three firms pleaded guilty to breaching Section 19 of the Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986, in failing to ensure that their employees were safe from injury and risks to health, while at work.

Manuele Engineers was convicted and fined \$15,000 over an incident in May 2004, in which a 35 year old man suffered permanent and debilitating leg injuries, when a steel beam fell on him as he attempted to move it with a gantry crane.

Amcor Packaging (Aust) Pty Ltd was convicted and fined \$14,000 over an incident in July 2004 in which a 27 year old man, just 4 months with the firm, had three fingers of his right hand crushed in a packaging machine.

Adelaide Bag and Packaging Pty Ltd was convicted and fined \$14,400 over an incident in September 2004, in which a 42 year old man, 6 months on the job, had a finger crushed and later amputated when caught in the exposed rollers of a paper-bag making machine.

Source: SafeWork SA

'Position, position, position' - the key to safer workplaces

20 November 2006

Members of Australia's peak ergonomics body have been told at their annual national conference in Sydney that they are in an excellent position to help improve workplace safety.

"Ergonomists can assist industry deliver real safety improvements by designing work processes which influence posture, repetitive movements and materials handling in the workplace," a senior WorkCover NSW executive told delegates.

Jenny Thomas, Director of WorkCover's Industry Programs Group, was delivering the opening address to the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Australia's 42nd annual conference at University of Technology Sydney (UTS) on behalf of NSW Minister for Commerce, John Della Bosca.

WorkCover NSW is premier sponsor of the three-day event, which is accompanied by a trade exhibition at UTS.

Ms Thomas said the input of ergonomists into the safe design of work processes was in accord with WorkCover's prevention-based approach to preventing illness and injury in the workplace.

"If we can identify risks and deal with them before they give rise to illness, injury or fatality, then we reap the considerable social and economic benefits," she said.

Ms Thomas said WorkCover had a crucial responsibility to provide advice and assistance to industry, employers and workers to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities under the occupational health and safety legislation.

"In the past 18 months WorkCover has taken its safety message the

Continued on page 2

ADVERTISING

A limited amount of advertising has been approved by the Safety Institute of Australia.

If you want to advertise to over 3,000 safety professionals in Australia, please contact Joanne at the SIA Secretariat through natadmin@sia.org.au





SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 1

length and breadth of the state, using a diversity of tools, including its Safety Bus and its Business Assistance Unit, which has delivered over 400 workshops to more than 7,500 employers and business operators," she said.

"Safer workplaces with fewer injuries also help contain workers compensation costs.

"Workers compensation premiums have reduced by 20 per cent in just 12 months, delivering the State's businesses and the NSW economy a \$560 million boost per year," Ms Thomas said.

Source: WorkCover NSW

13 people overcome by carbon monoxide fumes at courthouse

SYDNEY, November 22 2006

Thirteen people working at Parramatta courthouse were taken to hospital early this morning after inhaling carbon monoxide.

An ambulance spokesman said emergency services were called to the courthouse, in Sydney's west, at about 3.30am (AEDT) after cleaners were overcome by fumes.

He said it was first believed the fumes were from cleaning fluids but it is now thought they were carbon monoxide fumes from a petrol powered cleaning machine used in a confined area.

"Officers used breathing apparatus to go in there and take two patients to safety," he said. "As time evolved more people were affected."

He said 13 cleaners and sheriff officers at the courthouse were taken to Westmead Hospital overcome by the fumes. Two of them are in a serious condition and the other 11 are stable. There were no prisoners in the courthouse cell at the time. AAP

Inmates returned to prison after failed drug tests

BRISBANE, November 21 2006

Nine prisoners at a central western Queensland work camp have been returned to jail after failing drug tests.

Staff at the Capricornia Correctional Centre and police conducted urine testing on all prisoners at the Blackall work camp on Saturday. Eight prisoners tested positive to cannabis while one failed to supply a sample.

All were returned to the prison, near Rockhampton. A Corrective Services spokesman said Blackall police were investigating the source of the drugs. Work camps are prisoner rehabilitation programs, where inmates perform community service. AAP

Man killed by backhoe in Brisbane

BRISBANE, November 21 2006

A man has died in hospital after being run over by a backhoe in Brisbane's north-western suburbs.

Police said the 61-year-old man was loading the backhoe onto a truck in McGinn Road at Ferny Grove at 4.30pm (AEST) yesterday.

He drove it onto the truck, got out of the cabin and had gone to the back of the trailer to secure it when it rolled down and ran over him. The backhoe continued across the road, hitting a house and damaging it, but there was no-one home at the time.

The man was taken to the Royal Brisbane Hospital with serious injuries but died at 8.15pm (AEST). AAP

State inquiry criticises federal workplace laws

SYDNEY, November 23 2006

A NSW parliamentary committee inquiry has criticised the federal government's workplace laws upheld by the High Court last week.

The states and the union movement last week failed in their bid to convince the court that the Work Choices legislation was unconstitutional.

In a majority report released today, Labor and Democrat members of the NSW upper house Standing Committee on Social Issues argued the laws were bad for vulnerable workers.

"Contrary to the claims of the federal government, the committee believes that Work Choices will exploit the most vulnerable in our community, leading to low pay work in a low productivity economy," inquiry chair Jan Burnswoods wrote in a foreword to the report. "It will exacerbate the skills shortage in Australia and lead to a reduction in workplace safety."

In a dissenting report, coalition MPs said the inquiry had had "a purely political purpose on behalf of the NSW Labor Party and its allies in the union movement". AAP

Clean Air In Pubs And Clubs From 1 December

From 1 December, ACT pubs and clubs will be required to ensure their air is clear from tobacco smoke for patrons.

Ms. Gallagher was speaking in the ACT Legislative Assembly about the Smoking (Prohibition in Enclosed Public Places) Act 2003 due to come into effect on the first of next month.

"All enclosed public places in the ACT such as restaurants, pubs or nightclubs will be required to be smoke-free from 1 December, 2006" Ms. Gallagher said. "This phase of minimising the public's exposure to the harmful

Continued on page 3



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 2

effects of tobacco smoke and preventing the uptake of smoking will ensure that the ACT continues to maintain its strong record of national leadership and achievement in tobacco control."

The purpose of these laws, which were passed in 2003, is to avoid exposing people to tobacco smoke in public places where the building is not sufficiently open to allow natural ventilation. Local establishments have now had three years to ensure that their premises are compliant with the legislation when it takes effect next month."

The Minister said that the Health Protection Service has also been working closely with businesses to help them understand and implement the new smoke-free legislation.

"Public Health Officers have been visiting premises to provide information and guide businesses on how to comply with the new laws and will continue to do so in the lead up to 1 December. This includes the dissemination of information fact sheets, flyers, sample coasters and posters to businesses."

This is in addition to the advertising campaign that has been running since June this year which includes television and radio ads, and moving billboards on the back of Action buses. Advertising will continue through until mid December 2006 followed by a general information campaign running into 2007. Parties found not complying with the new provisions could face penalties ranging from \$500 (for individuals) up to \$5000 (for Corporations).

Source:ACT Government

Editor: The report is available for download at <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/PARLMENT/Committee.nsf/0/5A756DCDE43CA110CA25722F0000C7E1>

Three public hospital staff sacked over abuse or assault

SYDNEY, November 23 2006

Three health workers in NSW hospitals have been sacked in the past six months following allegations they attacked or abused patients or visitors.

New figures from NSW Health on serious incidents and misconduct in the state's public hospitals have

Continued on page 4

Don't miss Australia's premier OH&S event...

TWO DAY CONFERENCE | 5 - 6 December 2006 | Sydney Marriott Hotel

OH&S AND WORKERS COMPENSATION REFORM 2006

... get the answers to your OH&S problems and discover the latest in OH&S policy reform

SAVE \$200
Register using
priority code SIA
to receive your discount!

For more information or to register visit the OH&S conference website at www.iqpc.com.au/au-3457-001, call Sam Morrow on 02 9229 1067, email sam.morrow@iqpc.com.au or fax your completed form to (02) 9223 2622

Researched & developed by

human resources 
a division of IQPC

Organised by


International Quality & Productivity Centre

Name: _____ Position: _____

Organisation: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone: () _____ Fax: () _____



SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 3

revealed 38 cases of alleged assault or abuse.

Sixteen cases involved allegations of assault or abuse of hospital staff, but 15 cases involved the staff themselves assaulting or abusing patients and visitors. Seven cases involved assault or abuse of patients by visitors or other patients.

NSW Health Minister John Hatzistergos said his government had a "zero tolerance" policy on violence in the health system and three staff members had been sacked. Two further workers were under investigation, one other had been counselled and another moved to other duties.

Eight allegations were found to be unsubstantiated, Mr Hatzistergos said. He said the government had already dedicated \$12.5 million to improve security measures at hospitals, including the installation of closed circuit TVs and increases in security staff.

"There is no place for violence or other misconduct in our health system," Mr Hatzistergos said. "Patients need a therapeutic setting for recovery and care, free from any threat of violence. Our doctors, nurses and paramedics also need to be kept safe from hostility and physical assault so that they can do their best for patients."

The NSW Health data also revealed there had been one case of alleged fraud, three cases of medication being misplaced and one case of medical records being misplaced in the past six months.

AAP

Tough fines and jail for rogue security guards

BRISBANE, November 23 2006

Rogue security providers could face heavy fines of more than \$30,000 or up to 18 months jail under new laws to be introduced into Queensland's parliament next week.

The legislation will be the toughest in Australia, Premier Peter Beattie said. Unlicensed security guard providers would face fines of up to \$37,500 for a first offence, five times the current penalty, and 18 months jail for repeat offenders.

Mr Beattie said the crackdown follows a spate of recent incidents, including the death of a young man outside a hotel in Brisbane's west in May.

"Hospitality and tourism is a key part of this economy and the backbone of a lot of people's businesses and we don't want criminals and we don't want thugs involved," he said. "We've had a number of young people who have lost their lives and this is about the government saving them."

Even locksmiths, crowd controllers, electronic surveillance installers and guard dog handlers will undergo background and criminal history checks to become licensed under the Security Providers Amendment Bill. At present, such people do not need licences.

"In terms of a locksmith, for example, I would think everyone would want to ensure that a locksmith doing work at their place wasn't a criminal," Mr Beattie said. The laws were likely to come into force around the middle of next year after consultation with the security industry.

Fair Trading Minister Margaret Keech said the government was also concerned about the infiltration of outlaw motorcycle gangs into the security industry, particularly on the Gold Coast.

"These amendments will go a long way to getting rid of those sorts of very undesirable people who we certainly don't want in the Queensland industry," she said.

AAP

Fatigue roadblocks reveal continuing improvement in compliance

November 24, 2006

A WorkSafe roadblock exercise at Carrabin near Merredin last weekend has revealed further improvement in compliance with fatigue safety laws.

The joint roadblock was conducted by WorkSafe inspectors, WA Police and Main Roads, with assistance from the State Emergency Service, Merredin Roadwise, the Shire of Westonia and South Australia Transport Safety Compliance.

WorkSafe Acting Executive Director Gail McGowan said today the operation found that transport companies were generally complying with the laws for commercial vehicles, but there was still room for improvement.

"It's pleasing to see that transport companies are largely in compliance with the major aspects of WA's fatigue regulations, but we must keep in mind that fatigue is still a significant occupational safety and health issue in the commercial transport industry," Ms McGowan said. "We've seen a steady increase in understanding of the fatigue laws over the past couple of years, and it seems that the industry has come to grips with the fact that the laws are there to ensure commercial vehicle drivers are given sufficient rest. Although compliance with the major aspects of the regulations such as adequate rest breaks has become widespread, there are still some breaches occurring and notices were issued for these."

"A comprehensive code of practice for the management of fatigue has been in operation in WA since 1998, and it was updated in 2003 when the regulations came into effect. I would encourage any company involved in commercial vehicle transport to have copies of the code of practice available to all employees."

Source: DOCEP

Continued on page 5





SAFETY AT WORK BULLETIN

Continued from page 4

Spotless P&F Pty Ltd Pleads Guilty

13 November 2006

Spotless P&F Pty Ltd has pleaded guilty in the Darwin Court of Summary Jurisdiction to criminal charges referred to the DPP by Comcare following an incident involving a bridge crane at Darwin Naval Base in 2003.

Spotless P&F Pty Ltd pleaded guilty to a breach of the Occupational Health and Safety (Commonwealth Employment) Act 1991 and was discharged after agreeing to a \$1,000 good behaviour bond for 12 months.

The plea follows the conviction of Konecranes Pty Ltd on a breach of the Act for the same incident. The charges stemmed from a Comcare investigation of the incident, which involved a 30kg end stop falling from a crane serviced by Spotless P&F Pty Ltd. The crane had been incorrectly modified by an unqualified representative of Konecranes Pty Ltd, who had been subcontracted to carry out the work. No injuries resulted from the incident.

In making the ruling the Magistrate noted that, while Spotless P&F Pty Ltd was ultimately responsible for the equipment, there was nothing in a practical sense that the defendant could have done to avert the incident.

Source: Comcare

Labour Law Conference in Australia

In September 2009 the Australian Labour Law Association will be hosting the World Congress of Labour Law. Further details such as dates can be found at <http://www.labourlawsydney.com>

Two new ACT WorkCover publications

ACT WorkCover has released two new reports, one into preventing falls from heavy vehicles and the other concerns safety issues with light fittings in retail stores and centres. Both are available through the links below

<http://www.workcover.act.gov.au/pdfs/hazalerts/HA38-LightFittings.pdf>

http://www.workcover.act.gov.au/pdfs/other/Falls_From_Heights_Heavy_Veh.pdf

Adobe Acrobat V7.08 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 7.08 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>

SIA Safety At Work Bulletin
Issue 79, November 27, 2006
ISSN 1832-6714

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

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

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

Disclaimer

Entire contents, Copyright © 2004 – 2006 Workplace Safety Services P/L and its partners unless otherwise stated. All rights reserved. Reproduction, and redistribution, of this publication in any form without prior written permission is forbidden. The information contained herein has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable.

Workplace Safety Services P/L and the Safety Institute of Australia shall have no liability for errors, omissions or inadequacies in the information contained herein or for interpretations thereof. The reader assumes sole responsibility for the selection of these materials to achieve its intended results. The opinions expressed herein are of the authors.

Any views and opinions in this Bulletin are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher or the Safety Institute of Australia.

No part of this magazine may be published or copied without permission from the publisher.

This file cannot be forwarded without the formal and written permission of the Safety Institute of Australia and Workplace Safety Services P/L.