



# SafetyWeek



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## Release Of Workers' Compensation Statistics Shows Industries Need Further Incentives To Improve Safety

By: Michael Tooma, Alena Titterton and Laura Maytom

24 March 2009

On 12 March 2009, the Australian Safety and Compensation Council released the latest Compendium of Workers Compensation Statistics Report analysing accepted workers' compensation claims, breaking down compensated work-related injury and disease amongst Australian employees between 2000-01 and 2006-07 (the Report).

### Fatalities

The Report provides preliminary data for the 2006-07 year including that there have been 236 compensated fatalities. While the number of fatalities has decreased by 21% over the period from 2000-01 to 2005-06, there was little change in the number of fatalities in 2004-05 (255 fatalities) and 2005-06 (254 fatalities) demonstrating a decline in the rate of improvement.

Industries with the highest fatality rates were as follows:

Industry	Number of fatalities	Percentage of all compensated fatalities
Construction	50	21%
Transport and storage	45 (with 31 in road freight transport)	19%
Manufacturing	36	15%
Property and business services	15	6%

The transport industry will focus on the data demonstrating that intermediate production and transport workers accounted for 30% of fatalities in the preliminary data from the 2006-07 year with truck drivers accounting for almost two-thirds of those, perhaps demonstrating that the chain of responsibility legislation for the heavy vehicle truck driving industry introduced throughout Australia has yet to filter through to improvements in safety outcomes.

### Incidence rates

The Report indicates that the national incidence rate for all industries in 2006-07 was 14 claims per 1000 employees. However, four industries exhibited incidence rates substantially above the national rate of 14 claims per 1000 employees:

- Manufacturing (28 claims per 1,000 employees);
- Transport and storage (26 claims per 1,000 employees);
- Agriculture, forestry and fishing (25 claims per 1,000 employees); and
- Construction (22 claims per 1,000 employees).

All industries recorded falls in incidence rates over the six year period reported,

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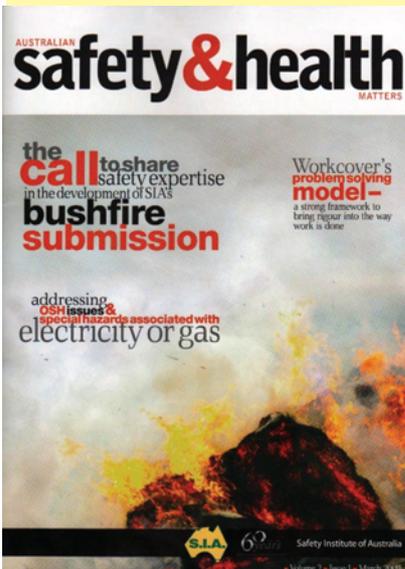


## Australian Safety & Health Matters

The latest edition of the Safety Institute's member publication is now available.

More information on the publication is available at <http://sia.org.au/news/magazines>

An online version of the latest edition is available at [http://digital.crowtherblayne.com.au/?xml=crowther\\_safety.xml](http://digital.crowtherblayne.com.au/?xml=crowther_safety.xml)



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though the wholesale trade industry only recorded a 1% fall. The electricity, gas and water supply industry recorded the largest percentage fall in incidence rates over the six year period, with a staggering 43% fall from 14.6 in 2000-01 to 8.3 in 2005-06, now well below the national average for incidence rates.

### Serious claims

Over the period 2000-01 to 2005-06, the number of serious claims decreased 6% from 144,740 claims to 136,575.

On average, 86% of all serious claims were injury and musculoskeletal disorder claims. The Report indicates a 7% decrease in this group (from 126,915 claims in 2000-01 to 117,930 in 2005-06) which would seem to support the assertion that the rate of improvement is too slow to meet the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012 target of a 40% reduction in the incidence rate of injury and musculoskeletal claims.<sup>1</sup>

The most common injuries resulting in serious claims were:

- Sprains and strains of joints and adjacent muscles – 41.1% of all serious claims;
- Fractures – 8.4% of all serious claims;
- Open wounds (not involving traumatic amputation) – 8.4% of all serious claims; and
- Disorders of muscle, tendons and other soft tissues – 7.1% of all serious claims.

Falls, trips and slips of a person continue to be over-represented in the statistics with little change to their prevalence. Falls, trips and slips are the second most common mechanism resulting in serious injuries, consistently representing around 20% of all serious claims between 2000-01 and 2005-06.

### Further incentives required

While many of the statistics show falling incidence rates, the rate of improvement is too slow to meet national targets. A picture is emerging, in both the release of the Report and the statistics reported in the most recent Comparative Performance Monitoring Report, 10th Edition that current OHS strategies are not achieving the targeted outcomes for improvements in OHS performance which have been set by the National OHS Strategy 2002-2012, which begs the question – is the existing regulatory regime working? Australia remains ranked as 6th for OHS performance behind Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Norway and Denmark.

The results demonstrate the need for additional mechanisms to be used in the approach to current regulatory efforts to improve safety performance. As the economic climate continues to dominate the focus of business operations, industry needs more effective incentives to encourage safety expenditure to ensure that the reduction of workplace injuries does not continue at such a slow pace or plateau in Australian workplaces. Governments in this economic climate should investigate the introduction of tax concessions for safety expenditure in Australian workplaces to drive further improvements in Australia's safety performance.

[The original article is at <http://www.deacons.com.au/legal-services/ohss/legal-updates/legal-update.cfm?objid=6927>

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## Chemical Leak

24 March 2009

Ten fire units are currently on scene at the Port of Brisbane attending to seven containers which are leaking an unknown chemical. The chemical has been isolated to inside the containers. No one has been injured.

Source: Q'ld Dept. of Emergency Services

## Bush Outfitter Fined Over Work Injury

27 March 2009

A leading Australian manufacturer of boots and garments has been convicted and fined in the SA Industrial Relations Court today following an injury suffered by an employee.

Today RM Williams Pty Ltd was fined a total of \$14,400 plus costs after pleading guilty to

1 We note that data from the recently released Comparative Performance Monitoring Report, 10th Edition (which uses a different base line to the workers compensation compendium statistics) shows that the 16% improvement recorded from the base period up to 2006-07 is below the rate of improvement required to meet the target of a 40% reduction by June 2012.

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## Queensland Safety Conference - Call for Papers

16-18 June 2009 Brisbane  
Convention & Exhibition Centre

The Queensland Safety Conference, presented by the Safety Institute of Australia (QLD & NT Division), will return to the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre on 16-18 June 2009.

The conference aims to advance the science of safety and provide practical solutions for delegates to implement immediately in their workplace.

More information is available at [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

## Job Ad

The following job advertisement has been released in the last week or two.

### NSW

Bartter Enterprises Pty Ltd - Injury Management & Claims Coordinator

More information on these can be found at <http://www.sia.org.au/jobs>

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two breaches of workplace safety laws, in failing to provide a safe workplace and plant and failing to notify SafeWork SA of a notifiable work-related injury.

SafeWork SA prosecuted the firm after investigating an incident, which occurred at the company's Salisbury factory in February 2007.

A female employee had two fingertips of her right hand trapped and crushed in a machine, which stamped logos on leather products. The injuries required surgery to repair a fractured finger, and she also suffered a severe shock reaction.

SafeWork SA was notified by the victim herself about a week later.

Investigators found the machine had inadequate features to prevent access to moving parts, and a risk assessment conducted five years prior was informal and undocumented.

The court was told that the employee was new to the task involved and had operated the machine for about 30 minutes when she was injured.

In his decision on penalty today, Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke said worse injuries than those suffered by the woman could have eventuated:

"The... offence occurred as a result of an inappropriately informal approach to (the employer's) obligations with respect to operators of this machine. The risk had been present for a considerable period... was clearly foreseeable and easily avoided."

Magistrate Lieschke discounted the penalty by 20 per cent for the company's early guilty plea, contrition, cooperation and remedial action to improve its safety systems.

Source: Safework SA

## Man Injured After Fall From Roof

27 March 2009

A man was seriously injured after falling from a building roof off Townsville Road, Ingham just after 8am. He was initially taken to Ingham Hospital, before being transported by Queensland Ambulance Service paramedics to Townsville Hospital in a critical condition.

Source: Q'ld Dept of Emergency Services

## Out Of Control Hose And Unsafe Work Systems Threaten Contracts

25 March 2009

A company has acknowledged the potential impact of a workplace health and safety failings telling a magistrate contracts worth millions of dollars would be jeopardised if it was convicted.

Barry Bros Specialised Services Pty Limited pleaded guilty last week to one charge of failing to provide and maintain a safe system of work before Melbourne Magistrate Felicity Broughton.

The company was charged with having unsafe systems of work after a high-pressure cleaning hose and restraining device failed during routine cleaning in the Burnley Tunnel on 3 June 2006.

A nearby employee of another company received serious leg injuries in the incident.

Barry Bros General Manager, Steven Pewtress, told the court a conviction would affect its capacity to tender for public sector work, which accounted for half its \$50-million turnover.

WorkSafe argued that a conviction was warranted as the use of high-pressure hoses had inherent dangers and that having chosen to conduct such a business Barry Bros was responsible for ensuring work was conducted safely.

Barry Brothers was not convicted, but was fined \$60,000. Magistrate Broughton said the firm took outstanding steps to improve safety after the incident, had demonstrated remorse and been of good character since it began in 1958.

Had it not pleaded guilty, she said, the company would have been convicted and fined it \$80,000.

Barry Brothers operates in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia and was contracted by another company to carry out high pressure pipe cleaning services to flush drainage pipes under the Burnley Tunnel in Melbourne.

It engaged a third company, Total Gas Care Pty Ltd to use Closed Circuit Television to

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## Safety In Action Conference Videos

A selection of speakers at next month's Safety In Action Conference have recorded YouTube videos discussing Australia's occupational health and safety challenges.

The line-up includes WorkSafe executive director John Merritt, Federal Safety Commissioner Helen Marshall, psychologist Dr Martyn Newman, WorkSafe Victoria workplace support and education division manager Jill McCcal and international experts addressing 12 themes over three days.

The video interviews can be viewed at [www.siaconference.com.au](http://www.siaconference.com.au).

Source: Safety Institute of Australia

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check the drains after which Barry Brothers' employees would clean them.

The CCTV operator was a deemed employee of Barry Brothers.

A fitting connecting a high pressure water line to a control valve failed as did a device to restrain the high pressure water line during the water-jetting process.

The water line whipped around in an uncontrolled way hitting the CCTV operator's lower left leg causing serious injuries, including a 15 centimetre wide open wound and a broken tibia. His other leg was also hurt.

Had Barry Brothers complied with the Australian Standard which requires an exclusion zone when operating high-pressure cleaning equipment and inducted the injured worker, the injury would not have happened.

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

## Tractor Rollover

27 March 2009

A man was transported to Nambour Hospital following a tractor rollover on a property off Cooroy-Belli Road, Cooroy around 7am. He was suffering from back pain and hand injuries.

Source: Qld Dept of Emergency Services

## Construction Company Fined \$40,000 Over Untrained Tilt-Up Workers

March 30, 2009

A construction company has been fined a total of \$40,000 for failing to ensure that tilt-up construction workers had completed approved courses after a panel collapsed at a site in East Perth.

Hanssen Pty Ltd pleaded guilty to two charges under the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations and was fined \$20,000 on each charge in the Perth Magistrates Court on Friday.

In July 2006, WorkSafe inspectors attended a construction site in East Perth in response to a report that a tilt-up panel had collapsed at the site.

In the process of issuing prohibition notices to the site manager, the inspectors discovered that two workers had not completed an approved tilt-up safety course for the aspect of work in which they were involved.

When the inspectors returned to the site three days later, they found that one of the workers had still not completed an approved tilt-up safety course but was still performing tilt-up work.

Inspectors visited the site again a week after the initial visit and found a third worker performing tilt-up work without having completed an approved tilt-up safety course.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that the case illustrated that training requirements could not be ignored.

"Tilt-up construction is high-risk work and the regulations are there to ensure that the risks are avoided, or at least kept to a minimum," Ms Lyhne said.

"An enormous amount of time and resources has been invested in lessening the risks involved in tilt-up construction over recent years, and this case illustrates the importance of complying with the laws.

"The employer persisted in allowing workers without proper training to work in an activity in which training is absolutely vital to working safely.

"We have seen the tragic consequences of not sticking strictly to the laws where tilt-up construction is concerned, and everyone involved in the industry needs to ensure that safety is the top priority on site.

"A comprehensive Code of Practice on Tilt-up and Precast Concrete Construction has been available for some years, and copies of this code should be made available on all sites where tilt-up work is taking place."

Further information on tilt-up and precast concrete construction is available on the website at [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

Source: WorkSafe WA

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## SIA EVENTS

### Speed Networking Gippsland

Date: 22nd April 2009  
Time: 3:00pm - 5:00pm  
Location: International  
Power Mitsui Loy Yang B training  
Rooms, Barton's Lane Traralgon  
South  
ONLY \$20 FOR MEMBERS  
More information will be available  
this week at [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

### Womens Breakfast - Melbourne

12th May 2009 - Eureka Tower  
Following the success of the  
Women's networking event in  
2008 the first for 2009 has now  
been scheduled. Further details  
will be available shortly at [www.sia.org.au](http://www.sia.org.au)

### Letters to the Editor

If you have any safety issues  
to discuss, or concerns about  
SafetyWeek itself, please  
consider communicating  
with the Editor through  
[natadmin@sia.org.au](mailto:natadmin@sia.org.au)

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#### New WorkCover Prosecution Results Summary

Shane Grigg (VWA) -v- Jimmy Lau - 25/3/09

Summary: Fraudulently obtain payments for another

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/150809>

Mark Coverdale (VWA) -v- Paul Duff - 25/3/09

Summary: Working whilst on benefits

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/COMP310809>

Jim Wason (VWA) -v- Reflections Cleaning Pty Ltd - 25/3/09

Summary: Fail to forward claim

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/comp170809>

Jim Wason (VWA) -v- Reflections Security Pty Ltd - 25/3/09

Summary: Fail to forward claim

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/comp180809>

Jim Wason (VWA) -v- Gough Bay Pty Ltd - 25/3/09

Summary: Fail to prepare RTW plan

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/comp160809>

Mark Coverdale -v- Stephen Anthony Farley - 25/3/09

Summary: Fraudulently obtain payments

<http://www1.worksafe.vic.gov.au/vwa/vwa097-002.nsf/content/comp320809>

Source: WorkSafe Victoria

#### Ambulance Service Disgusted By Rock Attacks

23 March 2009

Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS) Commissioner David Melville has expressed disbelief and anger after ambulance crews and members of the public were attacked with rocks in two separate incidents overnight.

"For one of these incidents to occur is disgusting but to have two in one night is absolutely shocking," Commissioner Melville said.

The first attack occurred about 11.30pm on Brisbane Road near the Dinmore Fire Station while paramedics were transporting a two-year-old girl with breathing difficulty to Ipswich Hospital.

A person allegedly threw a rock which hit the side of the ambulance, leaving the little girl and her parent slightly shaken and causing minor damage to the ambulance.

The second incident occurred about 1.30am on the Mt Lindsey Highway at Regents Park while an ambulance crew was heading back to their station.

A rock was allegedly thrown at their ambulance, hitting and smashing the left rear window.

Commissioner Melville said the crew were on their way to collect a replacement vehicle when they responded to a truck driver whose windscreen was struck and smashed by a rock in the same location.

"The man was treated for eye injuries and taken to Logan Hospital by a second crew after shards of glass flew into his face from the shattered windscreen," he said.

"Our thoughts are with this patient and we wish him a speedy recovery and I am thankful that no other members of the public or any QAS staff were injured during these incidents."

Commissioner Melville urged the public to report any suspicious behaviour near roadways and to be mindful of such incidents.

Police were notified of both incidents.

Source: Qld Dept of Emergency Services

#### Reminder Issued On Guarding Of Power Take-Offs

March 25, 2009

WorkSafe has issued a reminder on the importance of adequate guarding of power take-offs (PTOs) following a number of recent serious injuries involving unguarded PTOs.

WorkSafe WA Commissioner Nina Lyhne said today that several WA workers were seriously injured each year in incidents involving unguarded machinery.

"It seems that the message on guarding the moving parts of machinery is not getting

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through to everyone because unfortunately we have seen several very serious injuries involving unguarded PTOs over the past couple of years,” Ms Lyhne said. “Guarding of the moving parts of any machinery is crucial, but PTOs are an area of particular concern, particularly in the agricultural sector where PTOs are common.

“It is all too common for clothing and body parts to be caught by unguarded PTO shafts, resulting in serious injuries such as amputations.”

In recent years, several serious incidents have occurred, including:

- A worker at a turf farm whose arm was almost severed after being caught in a rotating PTO shaft when he moved between a tractor and a boom sprayer;
- An itinerant worker near Esperance whose arm was amputated when it became caught in an unguarded PTO, and a backpacker who lost several fingers in a similar incident near Geraldton;
- A TAFE student and a vineyard employee who both sustained serious leg injuries when their trousers became entangled in rotating PTO shafts.

Three different guards are required for PTOs in order to make all the moving parts safe – on the power output coupling, the implement power input coupling and the power take-off shaft.

Guards must meet the relevant Australian Standard and be the correct size and length for the application.

When working with PTO equipment, the following procedures should be undertaken:

- Disengage the power drive;
- Stop the tractor engine;
- Ensure that controls are in neutral and the hand brake is applied;
- Remove the engine key; and
- Wait for all movement to cease before attempting to clear any blockage, and use a tool to clear the blockage.

Guards should be checked regularly – daily if in use – for wear and damage, and damaged guards must be replaced before the PTO is used.

“Serious injuries involving power take-offs are still happening far too often,” Ms Lyhne said. “Guarding of the moving parts of machinery is still one of the easiest and most obvious means of minimising the risk of injury to machinery operators, and I strongly urge employers in workplaces with machinery to ensure that it is safe to operate.”

Further information on machinery guarding can be obtained on the website at [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

Source: WorkSafe WA

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