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A Christmas message from WorkSafe Western Australia Commissioner, Nina Lyhne

COME HOME SAFE – The most important reason for staying safe at work is not at work at all

This is a simple message but one that we hope will resonate in the WA community in these times of skills shortages, longer working hours and increased work stressors, where occupational safety and health isn't always as high a priority as it should be.

WorkSafe introduced a range of initiatives during 2007 to increase the profile of OSH and reinforce the message that we all need to come home safe at the end of our working day.

This edition of SafetyLine focuses on the issue of induction and some of the benefits of effective induction. The introduction of compulsory safety awareness training for those doing construction work commenced in January 2007. Approximately 150,000 cards have been distributed and informal feedback has been very positive, especially from those industry sectors who have never undertaken formal safety induction training before and have had the course tailored to meet their specific needs.

The new format of SafetyLine in the first part of the year heralded increased focus by our education team on tailoring our services more specifically to industries and stakeholder groups such as safety and health representatives. This change has also been very well received, and has been



followed by WorkSafe community education officers conducting an increased number of presentations in specific workplaces and to industry groups. Mailing subscription lists and information bulletins posted in all outgoing mail has added to our communication toolbox, along with our very popular lunchtime sessions.

Creating safety cultures has been a recurring theme throughout the year with WorkSafe forums held in Bunbury and Perth. The forums have been well attended and participation from

individual workplaces and organisations in Safe Work Australia Week has increased this year. A trend we hope will continue.

On a regulatory note, 2007 has seen greater focus on national consistency, with the introduction of new licensing requirements for people performing high risk work and a new standard for the construction industry. National campaigns have also been conducted in areas such as; demolition and removal of asbestos, large mobile plant civil construction, manual handling in metal manufacturing and the safety of labour hire workers. Within the state, the focus of inspectors has been on safety issues such as manual handling, working at heights, slips and trips and machine guarding. A successful interagency campaign was also conducted in road transport, focussing on fatigue. Whilst the majority of businesses are complying with OSH requirements we still have some way to go before we achieve our goal that would see WA work places free of injury and disease.

Overall it has been a very busy year for WorkSafe. In 2008 we look forward to further improving our services in education and enforcement and working with you to ensure that all people come home safe.

On behalf of the staff at WorkSafe, I wish you a happy and safe festive season.



CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Vehicle repair workshops

WorkSafe is conducting visits to vehicle repair workshops with spray painting operations during the 2007-2008 financial year.

Inspectors will look at all aspects of workshops to ensure compliance with OSH law, however some of the specific issues they will focus on include:

- health surveillance (routine medicals) for people exposed to isocyanates;
- hazardous substances management (information such as MSDS, training records and risk assessments);
- spray booth – construction, maintenance and function;
- respirators and personal protective equipment;
- evacuation and emergency procedures;
- electrical safety;
- prevention of trips, slips and falls; and
- provision of a clean area for food storage and preparation.

SUMMER SAFETY

There is a duty of care on employers to provide a safe working environment for outdoor work. As safety and health representatives you can make a difference in workers' awareness of the dangers of sunburn. Talk about the issue at your workplace through toolbox sessions, team and OSH committee meetings.

The Cancer Council along with WorkSafe has produced two new publications to assist in developing preventative sun safety procedures:

- *Skin cancer and outdoor work: A guide for employers*
- *Skin cancer and outdoor work: A guide for working safely in the sun (for employees)*

These are available from the Cancer Council website at:

www.cancerwa.asn.au → about cancer → publications → prevention and early detection

Or contact the Cancer Council Help Line on 13 11 20.

NEW standard for construction work

New regulations relating to the National Standard for Construction Work will come into operation for the civil/commercial construction sector on 3 January 2008 and for the residential construction sector on 21 April 2008.

The new regulations introduce requirements for:

- the provision of information;
- consultation; and
- planning, documentation and other measures to ensure occupational safety and health in the building and construction industry.

These changes include the preparation of safe work method statements for high risk construction work and the

preparation of OSH management plans for all construction sites where five or more people are working, or are likely to be working, at the same time.

The regulations apply to:

- main contractors and people with control of construction work;
- clients commissioning design and/or construction work as part of a trade or business; and
- designers doing design work for construction projects.

These regulations are contained in Division 12 of Part 3 of the *Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996*.

For more information go to www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

ARE GENERIC SAFETY INDUCTIONS EFFECTIVE?

Generic safety awareness training for construction workers has been in operation for nearly 12 months. The feedback to WorkSafe gives strong support to the principle of providing basic OSH awareness before starting work, to complement site and job specific training. However, as this initiative is new there has been no opportunity to date for formal evaluation of the effects on safety and health performance in the construction industry.

In 2005/6 research evaluating the effectiveness of mining industry entry level OHS training was carried out in Western Australia and Tasmania by Ian Douglas of Edith Cowan University. The research was unique given trainees from all walks of life the opportunity to evaluate a training program that many had been reluctant to attend. A similar situation exists in relation to construction safety awareness training.

Results showed that 80 percent of responses by trainees were positive. In fact, 60 percent of trainees attending their third or fourth repeat or refresher program thought the course made them more aware of OHS hazards in the industry. The researcher also pointed to a link between mining industry's overall safety performance and the introduction and continuation of the safety induction program.

The introduction of generic safety awareness training into the cleaning industry in 2004 has also produced positive results. (*See CleanStart card a must for industry safety.*)

The mining industry and the cleaning industry courses fulfil the requirements for units of competency in vocational education and training packages. Current moves towards national consistency in construction training will also see the induction training recognised within the construction training package. Therefore, newly qualified workers seeking to enter the relevant industry will have a basic level of OSH knowledge, ensuring that site specific and job specific induction reinforces what has already been learned.

It would appear that generic induction courses have an established place within general training courses and deliver benefits to both industry and individuals.

CONDUCTING SAFETY INDUCTIONS

The Christmas holiday period is a time when many businesses employ new workers or employ people on short term contracts to cover busy periods.

Duty of care provisions in the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* require employers to provide information, instruction and training to ensure workers are able to perform their work free from hazards.

The first step in introducing new workers into the workplace usually involves some form of induction training, which covers safety and health issues. In high risk industries such as mining and construction, safety induction is

required before a person commences work as part of industry or regulatory requirements.

For workplaces where induction is not mandatory, it is important to make safety and health induction training as useful and relevant as possible and to develop safe work attitudes. Handing someone a large file of policies and procedures and expecting a new employee to read and absorb them, is not an effective way of ensuring that duty of care obligations are fulfilled, or the person is mindful of safety when they are working.

The best place to start is to determine what new workers actually need to know and how to convey the information in a way that they will understand and absorb. A variety of ways can be used to achieve this such as:

- face to face discussion with safety and health specialists such as safety and health officers or OSH reps;
- checklists;
- reading materials with some question and answer type testing of understanding;
- peer to peer induction; and
- classroom based learning.

WorkSafe has resources available to assist in improving induction in your workplace.

The first step, a WorkSafe publication available online or in hard copy, contains a checklist for induction of new workers that can be adapted to your workplace.

New to the job is a short safety and health video, produced by WorkSafe, aimed at new and young workers giving an overview of hazards, risks, accidents, emergencies, safety and health laws and basic OSH rights and responsibilities. Workplace examples are used to show how to apply the ThinkSafe SAM steps to make workplaces safer. Spot the hazard, assess the risk, make the change.

SmartMove is an online educational resource for secondary school students going on work experience and work placements. Information for both students and teachers is available, can be adapted to form a good induction package for new workers.

For more information on induction resources contact WorkSafe on 9327 8777 or go to www.worksafe.wa.gov.au

CHRISTMAS in retail

Christmas can be an extremely stressful time in the retail industry.

The duty of care of employers extends to ensuring that people are protected from identified hazards such as fatigue, stress, violence and bullying.

WorkSafe has resources, including codes of practice and guidance notes, available to assist workplaces in setting up systems to remove or minimise these hazards. The website contains information for the retail and wholesale industry

www.worksafe.wa.gov.au → industries → wholesale and retail.

As each organisation is different, consulting with people should be the first step in determining the best ways to relieve workplace stress associated with Christmas.

Generally, employers can create a more positive working environment by:

- acknowledging good work, and having realistic expectations of workers;
- hiring extra people to cover busy periods;

- matching the skills and experience of workers to the job;
- ensuring that new people receive adequate supervision, support and training; and
- ensuring workers are trained to help them deal with unpleasant customers.

Many workers work longer hours in the lead up to Christmas. Creative shift design will minimise this stress by ensuring that:

- staff have adequate breaks during their shift;
- the break between shifts is long enough to allow for sleep and recovery;
- staff are given as much notice as possible about shift changes and working hours; and
- staff in customer service roles, are rotated, so they have a break from stressful tasks.

If you are a customer, please consider the safety and health of the person attending to you by being polite and patient.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT SAFETY AND HEALTH?

In 2007 WorkSafe 4thought lunchtime information sessions have proved to be very popular.

We would like to know what topics you would like to see covered in 2008. Please email any suggestions to: worksafersvp@docep.wa.gov.au

CLEANSTART card a must for industry safety

When you think about cleaning, you may not consider training an essential part of the job. But it certainly is, given the wide range of risks associated with this work that tend to be overlooked by most people.

Marian Marriott, from Tri Training Services – a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) catering for the WA cleaning industry – was the creator of CleanStart Card. Marian says that people generally thought cleaning jobs were similar to cleaning tasks they undertook at home.

‘The chemicals used by cleaners are much stronger, and there are more significant manual handling and slips, trips and falls issues,’ Marian said. ‘For example, if cleaners are asked to move something heavy, they sometimes do it without knowledge of the correct manual handling procedures. Similarly, electric shocks occur from not checking electrical equipment before use.’

The critical focus of the training is to reduce incidents and injuries on worksites across Western Australia. ‘There are lots of incidents in this industry that could be avoided through induction training,’ said Marian. ‘The training applies to people who have English as a second language and provides cleaners, regardless of literacy levels, with good OSH information like wearing the correct footwear, dealing with



Marion Marriott (2nd from left) CleanStart Card creator, training cleaners who have English as a second language.

security issues, working alone, and reporting hazards. We aim to help people look after their assets – their health and their ability to work.’

CleanStart Card induction was officially launched in mid-2004 by the then Minister for Education and Training, Alan Carpenter. The goal is for all cleaners to have a CleanStart card, similar to the mining and construction industries.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES – what are the OSH issues?

The duty of care responsibilities for employers, employees and contractors under the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984* extend to work related Christmas celebrations.

When you are having a few drinks or a celebratory meal with work colleagues, what do you need to consider?

Everyone is entitled to be treated with respect. That’s not to say that we shouldn’t have fun, but it should be fun for everyone. Make sure that the environment is not one in which people feel OK to hassle and harass others. Sexy Santas, rude or risqué gifts, strippers of either gender and uninvited Christmas kisses may offend or make people feel uncomfortable and they certainly send the wrong message to people about your organisation.

Set out ground rules for behaviour before the event, in a good natured way, so that people understand what behaviours are acceptable and what isn’t. It is also possible to do Santa gifts in a fun, but non hurtful and non threatening way. Make sure anyone who acts as Santa is clear about how far they can go in spreading Christmas cheer.

Ensure that the venue is as safe as possible. An inspection of the venue before the event will ensure the obvious hazards are eliminated or controlled. For example, slippery stairs, steps with no signage or markings, tables in front of exits, trip hazards etc. If the venue is outside on a sunny day, have sunscreen and/or shade available.

If you are serving alcohol, make sure food, non alcoholic drinks and water are also served to encourage people to drink sensibly. Call taxis or make sure alternative forms of transport are available for people who may be tempted to drink and drive.

Finally, don’t forget to have fun.

COMMENTS sought on the *Code of practice: Working hours*

The Commission for Occupational Safety and Health is seeking your comments on the *Code of Practice: Working Hours*.

The code outlines employers’ duty of care in relation to occupational safety and health risks that may arise from working hours arrangements and provides guidance on conducting a risk management process.

The comments you provide will be used to evaluate the code and consider whether improvements should be made.

Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential and used only to evaluate the code.

The online questionnaire is at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au you can also download a copy of the code, or purchase a copy from WorkSafe by calling 1300 307 877.

