

MONITOR

Official publication of the
Mining and Resource Contractors Safety Training Association

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MARCSTA is a not-for-profit Association. All proceeds are reinvested into the industry for future development of safety and training.

National harmonisation of OHS laws

Safe Work Australia expects draft model occupational health and safety legislation to be available for public comment in September. This will include the draft Act, model regulations and a draft Consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

Public comment will be limited to a period of six weeks which is patently inadequate and certain to be opposed by industry organisations that need to consult with their members.

Advertising by Safe Work Australia reminds readers that all state and territory governments have formally committed to the harmonisation of occupational health and safety legislation by December 2011.

Source: *The West Australian*, 26 August 2009, p34

"Wellness" must be learnt early in life

In a paper by Dr Janis Jansz, Senior Lecturer (Health, Safety and Environment), presented at the SIA-IFAP Safety Conference on 19 August, the introduction of 'wellness' concepts at an early age was recommended to combat current epidemics of obesity, diabetes and other health related issues as society will simply be unable to meet the health costs of an increasingly ageing workforce.

Dr Jansz emphasised that 'wellness' is not confined to physical wellness only and more attention needs to be paid to social, occupational, spiritual, intellectual, emotional and other dimensions if the notion is to be thoroughly understood.

One interesting recommendation for establishing a lifelong learning process to provide long term quality of life was for the introduction of a school based, Medicare driven wellness program for future generations with life expectancies approaching or exceeding 100 years.

To obtain a copy of the paper contact Dr Jansz.

Source: Dr Jansz, J.Jansz@curtin.edu.au.

New MARCSTA remote refresher option

MARCSTA currently offer the option for candidates to refresh their General Safety Induction card every two years by attending a half day refresher program with a nominated MARCSTA Provider.

It has become evident that some candidates are unable to complete the refresher program due to being located in remote locations.

In an attempt to offer our clients located in remote areas an opportunity to renew their General Safety Induction, MARCSTA has introduced a second option of completing a written assessment.

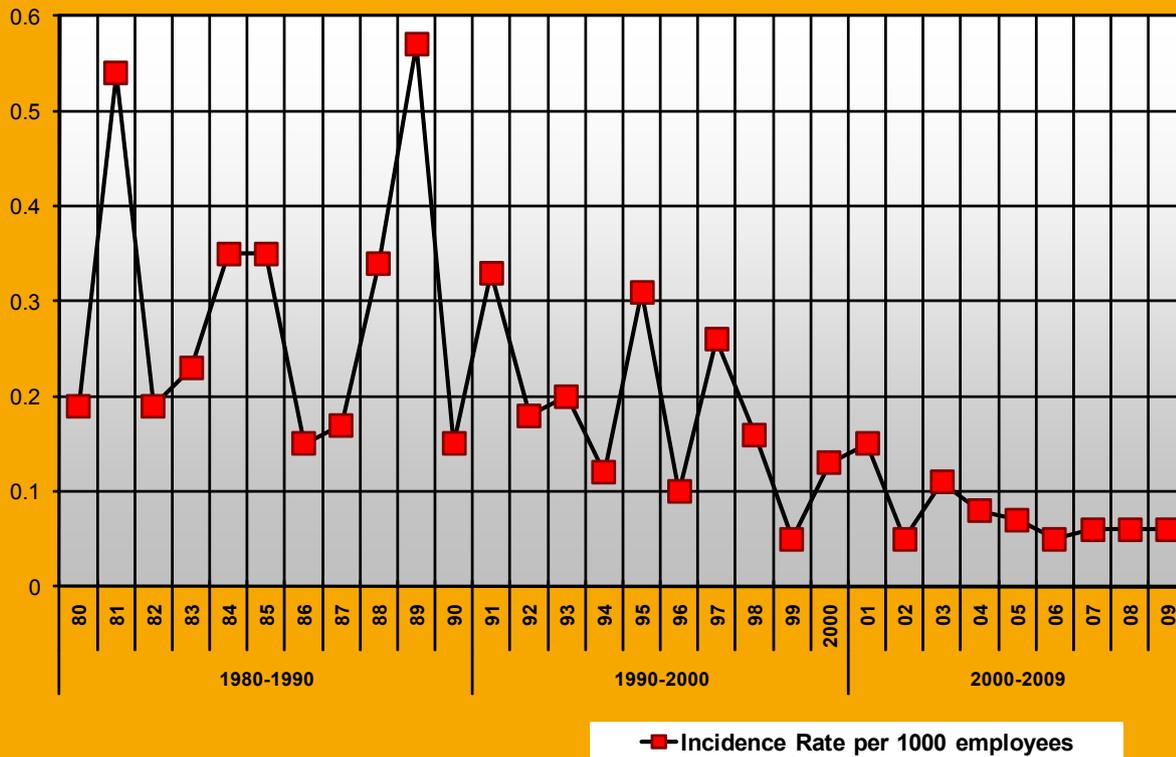
MARCSTA has two goals in providing an alternative refresher option:

- To recognise that some candidates require alternative arrangements for their refresher due to remote locations and inaccessibility of access to a MARCSTA provider.
- To enable candidates to maintain their General Safety Induction to ensure compliance with Occupational Safety and Health requirements.

Pre-requisites to sit the assessment are listed on our website.

The facts about fatality incidence in the mining industry

WA Mining Industry Fatality Incidence Rates



The unwarranted alarmist reaction when a fatality occurs in the mining industry is best responded to by recourse to the facts and yet this is seldom the case.

Over the past 30 years (1980-2009) the fatality incidence rate (deaths per 1000 employees) has been dramatically reduced in both the underground and surface working areas.

The Underground Sector

The fatality incidence rate in this sector has been reduced from an average rate in the 1980's of 1.6 to .2 in the 10 years since 2000, a reduction of almost 90%.

The major cause of fatalities prior to 2000, falls of rock, has been virtually eliminated and the 10 fatalities since 2000 have resulted from five different causative factors.

Since 2000 there have been two fatality-free years and single fatalities in four others.

The Surface Sector

The fatality incidence rate has been reduced from an average rate in the 1980's of .15 to .06 in the 10 years since 2000, a reduction of almost 60%.

The major cause of fatalities is the use of major plant and machinery used in the transportation of ore. This reduction in fatality incidence has been achieved despite a huge increase in the workforce, many of whom had little or no prior industry experience.

Confirmation of the continuing improvement in industry safety performance is represented in documents released by the Federal and State governments recently.

The Notified Fatalities Statistical Report July-December 2008 produced by Safe Work Australia in June 2009 reports that the four industry sectors which accounted for over three quarters of notified work-related fatalities were:-

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing (21);
Construction (16); Transport and

Storage (17) and Manufacturing (11). These accounted for 66 fatalities, Mining for 5.

WorkSafe WA's State of the Work Environment - Work Related Fatalities WA 1988-89 to 2007-08 shows quite clearly the downward trend in fatality incidence for mining while other major sectors recorded an upward trend.

Fatality incidence (deaths per 1000 employees) in 2007/08 were as follows:

Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	.16
Construction	.04
Transportation and Storage	.12
Manufacturing	.04
Mining	.03

It is important that spokespersons for the industry and critics of it support their comments with facts so that the public can be kept properly informed about actual OHS achievements and performance. Unfortunately this is seldom the case.

A more detailed analysis of the industry's 30 year performance is available on the MARCSTA website www.marcsta.com.

There is no acceptable fatality incidence rate. They are an abomination at any time.



New Resources and Infrastructure Industry Training Package RII09 – achievement in harmonisation of OHS training

The new Resources and Infrastructure Industry Training Package RII09 was endorsed by the National Quality Council and Ministers on 7 July 2009. The project was managed by SkillsDMC and overseen by the Rationalisation Project Steering Committee.

The new package is the culmination of four years research, development and consultation with industry, resulting in the rationalisation and consolidation of the following existing training packages:

- MNC04 Coal Mining Training Package
- MNM05 Metalliferous Mining Training Package
- MNQ03 Extractive Industries Training Package
- DRT03 Drilling Training Package
- BCC03 Civil Construction Training Package
- RII06 Civil Construction Training Package

The resulting new training package contains 741 units of competency, plus 173 imported units of competency. This is a significant reduction, from the original number of 1200.

There are now 60 qualifications reduced from 106, and 7 skill sets, up from the original number of 3.

Where it was identified that there was a duplication or similarity in units of competency

they have been consolidated, unless it was inappropriate to do so based on the unique requirements of a specific industry.

Several qualifications have been consolidated such as 'New Surface Extraction qualifications' and 'Merged Drilling qualifications'. There have however been many qualifications that have remained unchanged to meet industry needs, such as underground coal mining with specific working conditions.

There is a transition period of 12 months to allow Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) in the various states the time to upgrade existing training materials, and to change their scope of training with the nominated state bodies.

The next 12 months will offer challenging times for RTO's as they come to grips with the new training package, and the ever increasing industry demand for skilled workers.

Further information on these changes can be viewed at the SkillsDMC website www.skillsdmc.com.au.

MARCSTA has addressed the necessary modifications to its OHS training programs to ensure that the occupational health and safety units meet the requirements of the listed training package.

- RIIOHS201A Work Safely and Follow OHS Policies and Procedures
- RIIRIS201A Conduct Local Risk Control

An additional advantage for candidates will be the alignment of the General Safety Induction unit with the new Work Safely in the Construction Industry 'White Card'. This will give clients of MARCSTA greater scope for choice and opportunity to further their training qualifications.

MARCSTA members

ORDINARY MEMBERS

Alpha Safety Management
Ausdrill Ltd
Barmenco Limited
BGC Contracting Pty Ltd
Cape
Cemex Australia Pty Ltd
GFR Group

GR Engineering Services
GRD Minproc
Kellogg Brown & Root Pty Ltd
Roche Mining Process Engineering
Skilled Group Ltd
Terex Materials Processing and Mining Australia
Thiess Pty Ltd
Westrac Equipment Pty Ltd

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

AVELING
Jako Industries Pty Ltd
Mandurah Safety and Training Services Pty Ltd
Mine SafeGear
Strudwick HR

Incidence of mesothelioma in Australia

A report prepared by Safe Work Australia provides important information on the incidence of and death from mesothelioma in Australia.

Importantly the incidence appears to have stabilised at about 600 with a male/female ratio of 4:1.

The five year rolling average number of new cases over the time period 1982/86 to 2001/05 in each state and territory generally reflects population distribution. The number of new cases diagnosed in Western Australia increased at a similar rate to the other states until the mid 90's and then the rate reduced which is good news.

As expected, deaths due to mesothelioma follow a similar pattern. The number of deaths reached a maximum of 545 in 2004 but has declined to 486 registered deaths in 2006.

Due to the long latency between exposure to asbestos and diagnosis of mesothelioma, between 20 and 40 years, it is expected that the incidence of mesothelioma will not peak until after 2010.

The report is an extremely useful and authoritative document for occupational health professionals and epidemiologists.

Source: Mesothelioma in Australia, Incidence 1982 to 2005, Deaths 1997 to 2006, Safe Work Australia, June 2009

Mesothelioma in Israel

In June the Director of the Israel Health Ministry's cancer registry reported that the incidence of mesothelioma in a northern Israel coastal city reached 5.72/100,000 residents between 2002-2008.

An asbestos plant which operated in the town closed in 1997 and health officials expect the incidence to continue to rise due to the long latency period between asbestos exposure and the occurrence of cancer.

By comparison the highest rate of mesothelioma in the world is in Genoa, Italy with 518 cases/100,000 persons according to IARC.

Source: HESA July 2009

MESOTHELIOMA IN AUSTRALIA
INCIDENCE 1982 TO 2005
DEATHS 1997 TO 2006

JUNE 2009

 safe work australia

Hierarchy of control measures in the prevention of silicosis

WorkSafe British Columbia has highlighted the importance of the hierarchy of control measures for the prevention of silicosis in the construction industry.

The following activities have been identified:

Workers participating in any of the following activities (and many more) risk breathing silica dust:

- Sawing or grinding concrete
- Jackhammering, chipping, or drilling rock or concrete
- Abrasive blasting of concrete
- Cutting brick or tiles
- Loading, hauling, and dumping rock, gravel, or soil with high silica content
- Demolishing concrete or masonry structures
- Renovating facades and tuckpoint grinding
- Sweeping concrete dust
- Manufacturing stone products and ceramics

All of these activities apply to workplaces in Western Australia and so does the risk of contracting silicosis.

Source: Cloud Control, Heather Prime, WorkSafe Magazine, Vol 9, No. 4, WorkSafe BC

Childhood obesity in Australia remains a widespread concern

A report in the Medical Journal of Australia confirms that available data indicate that obesity affects 6 to 8% of Australian schoolchildren and that the proportion has continued to increase in recent years. Childhood adolescent obesity is associated with a wide range of immediate health concerns, as well as increasing the risk of disease in adulthood.

Source: Medical Journal of Australia, February 2009

USA adult obesity epidemic continues

A report released in July in the USA advises that adult obesity rates increased in 23 states and did not decrease in a single state in the past year.

Adult obesity rates now exceed 25% in 31 states and exceed 20% in 49 states and Washington DC. Two-thirds of American adults are either obese or overweight.

The report contains recommendations for addressing obesity within health reform and calls for a National Strategy for federal, state and local governments to promote collaboration among business, communities, schools and families.

Source: ISHN July 2009



MARCSTA training providers currently delivering

Dennis Aitken (U)
Jayson Aveling
Graham Bailey
Carl Berglin
Wayne Berkrey
Danny Bogнар
John Christie (C) (O)
Stacey Clark
Brian Cloney
Dale Cocker (U) (S)
Jim Dandie

Geoff Day
Vlad Doguilev
Peter Dowding
Linda Elezovich
Donelle Fraser (C)
Ross Graham
Brett Green
Sheryl Henley (C) (O)
Jeffrey Hickin
Ralph Keegan (S)
Joe Maglizza

Les McIntyre
Neil McMeekin
Guy Mead
Katherine Montague
John Preston
Merryn Richards
Jason Roberts
Victor Roberts
Grant Shearwin (C) (O)
Julian Strudwick (C)
Marcus Taylor

Peter Tynan
Micheal White
Graham Williams
Paul Willoughby
All training providers listed provide the General Safety Induction program.
C denotes the Work Safely in the Construction Industry program
O denotes the Occupational Safety and Health for Supervisors and Managers program.
S denotes the extended working hours program.
U denotes the underground program.



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Worker Health and Wellbeing

Shift workers and work related injuries

Safe Work Australia issued a report in August on the impact of shift work on work-related injuries which has some startling findings:

- the incidence (and frequency) of work-related injuries in shift workers is nearly double that of non-shift workers.
- the higher incidence of injury is not due to a lack of OHS training.
- female shift workers had higher frequency rates of work-related injury than males. Females in the clerical, sales and service occupations were particularly at risk.

Source: Work-related Injuries in Australia 2005-06, The impact of shift work on work-related injuries in Australia, Safe Work Australia, August 2009

Truck driver death

WorkSafe WA has issued a safety and health alert following the death of a truck driver who lost his life when a plastic kettle melted and set fire to the cab of his prime mover. The driver stopped at a truck bay, plugged the kettle into the cigarette lighter and placed it on the passenger seat to boil.

He climbed into the sleeper cab for a rest, fell asleep, the kettle boiled dry, melted and set fire to the seat.

The driver died from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Recommendations have been made to avoid a reoccurrence.

They could have included the further recommendation that fatigue and state of alertness should be closely monitored when driving long distances.

Source: WorkSafe safety and health alert 14/09

Full-time casual jobs affect mental health

Men who work in full-time casual jobs report significantly lower levels of mental health than those who are permanently employed.

A Flinders University study also revealed that casual employment has a much bigger effect on men than women.

Professor Sue Richardson, co-author of the study, said that men appeared to suffer from the social expectation of being a breadwinner which contrasts with the reality of working as a casual where employment can often be precarious.

The findings suggest that the changing economy is an important factor.

Source: Precarious Employment and Employees' Self-rated Mental Health in Australia, Guangyu Zhang, Sue Richardson

European campaign targets mental health in the workplace

In a European campaign “work. in tune with life. move Europe”, the European Network for Workplace Health Promotion (ENWHP) has focused on helping promote mental health in workplaces.

Useful and practical measures on promoting and preserving mental health will be shared by participating organisations. Based on the available literature and examples of good practices collected, materials will be produced to help employers and employees implement measures to promote good mental health at work.



The official opening of the campaign will be at the joint ENWHP/ProMenPol Conference in Berlin in October. See www.enwhp.org for further information.

Source: HESA News July 2009

Does sleep inertia (the grogginess experienced after waking-up) affect cognition and decision-making ability?

Research suggests that you are better off waiting at least three minutes after being woken from sleep before making any substantive decisions.

Results of one study, reported in the *Journal of Sleep Research* (Vol 8, 1999) were intriguing. For the first three minutes, subjects performed at only 50% of their daytime level. Between three and six minutes, performance rose to 75% and it reached 84% after 12 minutes – where it mainly remained for the rest of the half hour test.

Researchers reported in the *Journal of American Medical Association* (Vol 295, 2006) that study participants had severe impairments within the first three minutes of awakening and that cognitive performance immediately on waking was worse than performance during subsequent sleep deprivation.

These results have important implications because many safety-sensitive occupations require individuals to perform immediately on awakening.

Always be aware of sleep inertia and the adverse effect on your decision-making.

Source: *Circadian Workforce Solutions, Managing 24/7* July 2009

Eating at irregular hours affects your circadian rhythm

Research published in the international journal *Obesity* has provided evidence that eating at irregular hours affects the body's natural clock.

Previous studies have demonstrated that stomach enzymes perform at regular stages of the natural biological clock (considered to be about 6:30 am, 11:30 am, 6:30 pm) and that stomach disorders and quality sleep are consequences of eating outside those times.

This study on laboratory mice has shown that mice that were fed in the wrong phase gained a 48% increase over their baseline while those fed at the correct phase only gained 20% from their baseline.

Source: *International Journal Obesity*

Nanomedicine market to surpass US\$160b by 2015

Market research in the USA shows that the application of nanotechnology in the form of nanomedicine continues to surge at a stable rate. The drug delivery market represents the largest application area, while the biomaterials segment represents the fastest-growing application segment for nanomedicine over the years 2006-2009.

Source: OHS online June 2009

Nano-particles linked to respiratory disease

A study published in the European Respiratory Journal has for the first time claimed a concrete link between exposure to nano-particles in adhesive paint and development of severe pulmonary fibrosis in a group of young female workers in China, two of whom went on to suffer fatal lung failure.

Despite some fairly key data gaps, the importance of the study, particularly in relation to preventing further incidents of poor occupational health, is a major contribution to expanding the as-yet small knowledge base on nano-particle-related health effects.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NIOSH Science Blog, USA

Manual handling in the manufacturing industry - harmonised approach

Australian workplace safety inspectors conducted audits over a two month period (June-August) targeting the automotive components, wooden furniture and upholstered seats, sheet/structural fabricated metals and non-metallic mineral product sectors.

The visits are the sequel to a national safety campaign conducted in 2007 to counter the rates of injuries and disease resulting from heavy lifting, repetitive tasks and sustained awkward exposure in the manufacturing sector.

The results of the inspections should prove interesting.

Source: HWSA Media Release 23 June 2009

Proposed cutbacks in OHS requirements in Europe

A recent report on developments in the European Commission expresses grave concern at the push by a group of experts (named the Stoiber Group) to remove the requirement on small firms to produce a written workplace risk assessment.

Members of the group seem to see the obligation to manage health and safety at work by processing, preserving and communicating important data as an 'administrative burden' on firms.

The group calls for cuts of up to 20% in the number or length of workplace inspections and up to 30% for risk assessments. Reporting work accidents is considered a cause of over-spending and the Stoiber Group wants cuts of up to 100% in the time currently spent on this obligation.

Source: HESA News July 2009

Reporting of critical incidents needs appropriate focus

A paper presented recently at a Queensland conference on critical incidents occurring in the Western Australian mining industry from 1990 to 2006 has concluded that:

- the industry is failing to manage effectively non-fatal but permanent personal damage accidents and;
- that the reporting requirements have an inappropriate focus which needs to be altered to create frames of reference that reflect the patterns of damage.

The author, Dr Charlotte Nash-Stewart suggests that organisations provide, through the written word, through induction and training, a reporting mechanism which marshals the energies and sub-groups most often involved in fatal and non-fatal but permanent damage.

Though strictly for the serious safety professional, the paper does raise once again the need to address serious injuries and incidents which result in permanent damage and have the greatest financial and human consequences.

Source: What is a Critical Incident? Learning from Patterns in Australian Mining, Dr Charlotte Nash-Stewart, InterSafe Group.

Finding solutions to prevent the world's biggest occupational risk

Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL) is the world's most common and costly occupational illness and according to the World Health Organization (WHO) its incidence is on the increase. It is incurable, and most importantly, preventable.

NIHL is the name given to varying levels of hearing loss suffered as a result of noise exposure. While most commonly caused by industrial noise, the illness can result from excessive noise from any source including amplified sounds in pubs, nightclubs, concerts and major events. In 2006 legislation was passed in the EU to make hearing protection compulsory for any worker exposed to 85dB(A) or above, not just industrial workers.

Sensear's technology has the ability to eliminate NIHL and is the only technology effective in enabling speech communication to be clearly audible above 85 dB(A). Sensear's product range can prevent new cases of NIHL by enabling face-to-face, mobile phone and two-way radio communication in high noise without the wearer having to remove hearing protection. This is where traditional forms of hearing protection have failed. They do not allow effective communication.

The SENSTM technology has the potential to open up a new speech enhancement market that offers a more convenient and superior solution than existing hearing aids. Sensear's speech enhancement products provide an unobtrusive, hi-tech assisted listening solution for people with mild to moderate hearing loss who struggle to hear speech in high noise social situations.



Applications

Building and Construction

A variety of noise hazards in the construction industry coupled with the constant need to communicate make Sensear's earmuff and earplug range ideal for building and construction workers.

Mining

The Sensear range provides the mining industry with a single solution to noise risks ranging from explosions and heavy vehicles to drilling and processing equipment. Miners can now communicate effectively while wearing one type of hearing protection in all noise environments.

Manufacturing

Industrial accidents and occupational noise induced hearing loss are major costs to global economies. Sensear's affordable and effective product range revolutionizes the way manufacturing workers communicate, raising safety and efficiency levels while significantly reducing the incidence of NIHL.

Source: www.sensear.com. Contact: info@sensear.com

Noise and hearing loss contribute to accident risk

A Canadian study which looked at the effects of both noise and hearing loss on work related incidents has linked occupational noise exposure, hearing loss and the risk of accidents.

Source: OHS Reps

Heavy equipment safety training for British Columbian students

A four day, hands-on program offers high school aged students a chance to work closely with veteran equipment operators while learning about hazardous materials and worksite safety using heavy equipment ranging from skidsteers, graders and loaders to hydraulic cranes.

The province-wide program is designed to provide young construction equipment operators with a solid grounding in safe work practices well before their first day on the job.

The program is offered in a number of cities across British Columbia involving cooperation of the local construction industry, government, WorkSafe BC and local schools.

Source: WorkSafe Magazine, Vol 9, No. 4, WorkSafe BC



Student Hazen Harpur gets a driver's eye view of life as a heavy equipment operator during the 2009 Prince George Heavy Metal Rocks program.

Photo courtesy WorkSafe Magazine, WorkSafe BC

New British Columbian industry groups raise the bar on health and safety

Two industry groups have formed new health and safety associations aimed at elevating industry safety standards and combating the injuries and illnesses most common to their workplaces.

The new associations include the B.C. Food Processors Health and Safety Council, and the Occupational Health and Safety Division for go2, an already established non-profit human resources association for the tourism and hospitality industry.

Both groups have covered a lot of ground in a short time including the food processors' plan to deliver programs and resources to address the high rate of injuries among this group, including the number of MSIs, guarding incidents, and falls.

The group is also making significant strides in working to reduce its time-loss injury rate, considered one of the highest rates in the manufacturing sector, and one that's 50 percent higher than manufacturing as a whole.

Meanwhile, go2's occupational health and safety division is focusing on the health and safety needs of a varied industry that hasn't had successful health and safety support in the past. The division was launched in January 2009. Its initiatives include a review of health and safety issues for new and young workers, as well as the current legislation governing workers working alone — both issues relevant to an industry with a relatively high percentage of young workers, high employee turnover rates, and a considerable amount of shift work.

Source: WorkSafe Magazine, Vol 9, No. 4, WorkSafe BC

Workplace bullying still rife in Australian companies

A recent Drake International survey has revealed some disturbing information on the continuing incidence of workplace bullying and poor management of the issue in the workplace.

- 50% of survey respondents had witnessed bullying behaviour.
- 25% of respondents had been a target of bullying themselves.

- Only 30% of bullying targets and less than 50% of witnesses were satisfied with their organisation's handling of the situation.
- More than 50% noted that the bullying behaviour had been going on for over six months.

Though most of those surveyed were themselves in a supervisory role 'downwards' bullying from managers or supervisors were reported in around 56% of the cases, with a further 25% experiencing 'sideways' bullying from workmates and colleagues.

Some interesting, more subtle forms of bullying behaviour such as silence and isolation or verbal insults and sarcasm, are the most common representing 36% of instances. Public

humiliation and criticism was the second most common behaviour representing 26% of instances.

Gender was no barrier with males and females almost equally at fault, as the bully or as the target of the behaviour.

Drake's WorkWise National Client Services Manager, Jody Harper, commented that bullying behaviour can be tricky to address from an organisational standpoint particularly as only 50% of survey respondents sought assistance for the situation and suggested that organisations need to be pro-active and address inappropriate behaviour like bullying in a systematic manner if they want enduring behavioural change and improvement in the workplace.

MARCSTA training packages....

As a Registered Training Organisation, MARCSTA delivers occupational safety and health units of competency for the following national training packages:

Metalliferous Mining Training Package

Work Safely – MNMC201A

Conduct Local Risk Assessment – MNMC205A

Transport and Logistics Training Package

Apply Fatigue Management Strategies – TDTF1097B

Follow Occupational Health and Safety Procedures – TDTF197B

Construction, Plumbing and Services Integrated Framework Training Package – CPC08

Work Safely in the Construction Industry (Blue Card/White Card) – CPCCOHS1001A

Business Services Training Package – BSB07

OSH for Supervisors and Managers Course

BSBOHS301B - Apply Knowledge of OHS Legislation in the Workplace

BSBOHS303B - Contribute to OHS Hazard identification and Risk assessment

BSBOHS304B - Contribute to OHS Hazard Control

BSBOHS307B - Participate in OHS investigation

BSBOHS403B - Identify Hazards and Assess OHS Risk

BSBOHS404B - Contribute to the implementation of Strategies to Control Risks

BSBOHS408A - Assist with Compliance with OHS and Other Relevant Laws

Applications for recognition of prior learning may be lodged for all training programs. Details are available from the MARCSTA website www.marcsta.com



Mining and Resource
Contractors Safety
Training Association



MARCSTA who's who?

Chairman

Ross Graham, Terex Materials
Processing and Mining

Deputy Chairman

Joe Maglizza, Cemex Australia PL

Director Safety and Health

Patrick Gilroy AM

Training Manager

Sheryl Henley

Committee of Management

Allaine Coleman

Terry Condipodero

Peter Nicholl

Kim Stewart

Monitor Editor

Geoff Taylor

CANADA

Depression in Canada – mental health crisis

The Canadian Health Association describes men's mental health as a "shadowy crisis that is slowly coming to life".

In Canada men die by suicide about four times as often as women, but only receive a diagnosis of depression about half as often.

Often men do not recognise their mental health concerns until they have a great personal or economic cost.

However, they are more likely to seek help if they have a connection with supportive peers and access to health information.

So while workplaces bear significant costs of men's mental health issues (e.g. increased absenteeism, staff turnover, lower productivity) they are in a unique position to promote employees' mental health.

The number of people who killed themselves at work in the USA rose 28% to an all-time high last year, in a grisly statistic that sparked speculation it was due to stress linked to the economic recession.

Source: CCOHS Health and Safety Report, Vol 7, Issue 6. June 2009 and Risks Weekly 421, TUC, August 2009

NEW ZEALAND

Loss of National OHS Advisory Committee a blow to NZ workers

The Advisory Committee established in 2003 to provide independent advice to the New Zealand Minister of Labour on major OHS issues was wound up on 30 June with no explanation of the reasons or who was responsible for the decision.

Research carried out by NOHSAC academics and OHS professionals included the burden of occupational disease and injury and its economic and social costs, control of workplace exposures etc.

Four final reports were issued on 13 July 2009.

Source: New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Media Release 13 July

USA

Employing an older workforce can be beneficial

A recent study by the PMA Insurance Group in the USA has found that contrary to the allegation that an older workforce hinders efficiencies in production the opposite is the case.

In fact, the PMA study reports that as workers older than age 55 increase in the workplace so do productivity and overall workplace safety. However, when older workers do experience injuries, severity can be significant which is an issue that must be considered by safety professionals.

According to the paper the findings led to two conclusions:

- older workers are a benefit to the company that employs them
- it pays to make modifications to work environments to prevent injuries and limit the severity of injuries commonly sustained by older workers, particular noise induced hearing loss.

Source: OHS online June 2009

Texting while driving – a serious safety risk

Researchers at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute have found that the risk of a crash, or near crash, for long-haul drivers who texted while driving was 23 times higher than for comparable drivers who did not.

Researchers placed video cameras inside the cabs of long-haul truckers for 18 months to observe their behaviour – specifically, how long they watched the screen, instead of the road, when sending or receiving a text.

Fourteen American states have banned texting by drivers.

Source: OHS online August 2009

ERRATUM: The March edition included a graph of WA mining industry incidence of serious and minor injuries. The linear trend line showing below zero for 2007-8 was inappropriate. A curve is a better fit to the data if a four year moving average is used taken over 20 years, but if the data from the last 10 years are used, a linear trend line (four year moving average) fits reasonably well. This would, however, indicate zero in about 2012, which is quite unlikely to occur. Geoff Taylor, ed.