

## INTRODUCTION

Summer – yes, it may feel too soon to move your thinking in this direction, but the reality is that it's fast approaching. The September 2012 Edition of Building a Safe Workplace Together will support you in initiating your safety and risk management practices in relation to your Christmas activities; as well as assisting you in identifying controls to ensure your outdoor workers are not forgotten this summer.

With the next issue of Building a Safe Workplace Together to be released in January 2013, we trust that this edition brings you great warmth and happiness. We wish you and your colleagues a happy and safe festive season.

## OVERVIEW

- What have we been up to lately?
- What's New? OHS Software – Making safety simple
- Do you plan for your Christmas party?
- How do you manage the Christmas Rush?
- Training: Working with short term memory
- Managing summer hazards
- OHS harmonisation update
- Run with us: Melbourne Running Festival

## WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO LATELY?

Action OHS Consulting continues to work closely with our clients to build safer workplaces. Some exciting projects we have undertaken since our last newsletter include:

- The development of a Job Dictionary that outlines the physical and postural demands of the different tasks undertaken in the workplace. This project will allow our client to: (i) objectively establish pre-employment medical assessments that specifically relate to the functional requirements of the job; (ii) make manual handling, hazard based training and wellness programs specific to their employees jobs; (iii) provide a snapshot of the key hazards associated with the work undertaken in their workplace; and (iv) proactively manage workers compensation claims with the employee's treating practitioner as it provides an objective baseline for suitable (light) duties. This work will also allow our client to establish programs that ensure that as its workforce ages; their employees continue to have the functional capacity to do their job safely.
- Recent property and traffic management audits completed on behalf of a client moving to a brownfield site has allowed them to strategically and proactively manage health and safety issues before they arise after the move.

Along with the above work, Action OHS Consulting continues to support clients with audit programs to support them understand their safety management. Ergonomic assessments continue to identify workers are typically not familiar with what safe workstation setup looks like. If you are like many of our clients and have spent significant money on workstation equipment – consider encouraging your employees to complete the free self-assessment tool for fixed-height desks or height-adjustable desks, which are available for you to use on the Action OHS Consulting website.

## WHAT'S NEW?

### OHS SOFTWARE – *Making safety simple*

Action OHS Consulting has established a partner relationship with a proprietary software company. Our ability to offer our clients a web-based OHS Management Software solution is an exciting service addition. Why? Web-based OHS Management Software will instantly eliminate your paper and compliance struggle. It will allow managers, safety staff and HSRs to have ready access to safety information – supporting them to lead safety from the front. It will provide workers with a simple method to report incidents and access procedures. Web-based OHS Management Software will allow you to automate and distribute all of the OHS Events that take place in the workplace to the appropriate stakeholder and incorporate escalation notifications to ensure that what you say you do; is what you do. OHS reports can be run instantaneously and in real-time. This means that board reporting will be current; additionally it will take minutes, rather than hours or days, to prepare.

Financially, OHS Management Software will assist your business achieve a healthier bottom line. You should expect a reduction in compliance costs by at least 20%. If you are interested in making the transition to web-based OHS Management Software, simply [complete this survey](#) and one of our consultants will run a Return-On-Investment (ROI) report to support you to introduce the concept of a web-based OHS Management Software into your workplace.

Now more than ever before, businesses are moving away from paper- or intranet-based OHSMSs. Irrespective of your organisation's size or industry, this solution has a place within your organisation right now. To better understand how web-based OHS Management Software can improve your business operations; [view our website](#) or contact us on [info@actionohs.com.au](mailto:info@actionohs.com.au).

## DO YOU PLAN FOR YOUR CHRISTMAS PARTY?

In most legal contexts, the work Christmas party is considered part of the work environment – therefore, the workplace continues to have a duty to provide a safe work environment. Whilst recognised as a time to celebrate the year’s achievements, the work Christmas party also becomes a time fraught with OHS risk – as such, your workplace’s risk management practices need careful consideration.

Over the years there have been cases which demonstrate that employers may be liable under OHS laws for incidents that happen at work Christmas parties. Examples include a workplace being held responsible following: a worker suffering burns, and; a worker being injured after being pushed off a pontoon boat – both during their workplace’s Christmas party.

Also, employers may be liable for employees injured at a work function, regardless of whether or not the injury happened as a result of the employee being intoxicated. This follows a ruling by the NSW Workers’ Compensation Commission to accept a claim lodged by an employee who was injured following business drinks with a client. Even though the employee was intoxicated at the time of the injury, the NSW Workers Compensation Commission found that socialising with the client was in the course of employment.

So what steps will your workplace take to manage the risks associated with Christmas events? Not sure? Included below are some suggestions you may consider implementing to better ensure a safe end of year celebration:

- **Risk Assess.** Involve your HSRs and safety team in the event planning. Similar with all workplace activities, document a risk assessment that identifies all foreseeable hazards and their defined controls. Your risk assessment should consider an inspection of the site prior to the event.
- **Revisit and Remind Your Employees of Your Expectations.** In the days prior to the Christmas event, remind staff (by email or memo) about the expected standards of behaviour and the disciplinary consequences that may take place. This should see you reinforce your workplace’s OHS, EEO and Code of Conduct Policies to all attendees.
- **Be clear with when the event will finish.** Clearly set out defined start and finish times for the event and ensure that these are stated on the invitation. Realise that arranging or paying for drinks at an “after event” will most likely extend your liability.
- **Travel.** How will workers travel to and from the function? For workplaces in NSW, remember that your workers compensation obligations do not just cover the employee’s time at work, but also extends to the journey to and from work – in this case the Christmas event.

- **Manage alcohol.** Consumption of alcohol is likely to be a key risk. Consider restricting the amount of drinks or the strength of drinks that are available. Always have non-alcoholic alternatives available.
- **Provide food.** A meal or finger food has been shown to slow down alcohol consumption.
- **Supervise!** Someone should be nominated to monitor safety hazards such as wet floors, loose cables and manage incidents that may occur during the event. What are your internal first aid procedures? Supervision should include monitoring the controls identified within your pre-event risk assessment.
- **Debrief.** In the days following the event, review the pre-event risk assessment and evaluate the effectiveness of the identified controls. Good documentation at this end will support your planning for next year.

**What if an incident occurs?** Should an incident occur, it is important that you follow your workplace’s incident reporting and investigation process. After managing the incident; consider, if possible, to avoid commencing the incident investigation until people are (sober and) back at the workplace.

## HOW DO YOU MANAGE THE CHRISTMAS RUSH?

**Rushing to meet deadlines?** Whilst workers are most often trying to do the right thing by their employer, rushing to meet deadlines will often result in workers cutting corners, making bad judgements or ignoring the controls that have been established to provide a safe working environment. Management and supervisors should ensure that safety is actively monitored and inspected during this period so that it remains a key focus – let your employees know that “safety” is not entitled to Christmas leave.

**New or Novice Employees** – If Christmas is a period where new employees are hired, or temps engaged to cope with your increased demand, how do you ensure that they are appropriately trained, before letting them loose into the hustle and bustle of Christmas? Workers have told us that they are less likely to ask questions during this time as they “do not want to cause more work” for their colleagues – this unfortunately often leads to injury.

We have identified that some businesses introduce office based workers into the “shop-front” to support the Christmas rush. Whilst this may bring a united spirit between the office and the shop-front – it is important that the employees who come from the office are appropriately trained and competent.

*Maintaining a safe workplace will allow your employees to spend their Christmas with family and friends. This is what Christmas is all about...Right?*

## TRAINING: WORKING WITH SHORT TERM MEMORY

All organisations that we work with have a training focus as part of their hazard and risk management strategy. What this training looks like varies considerably. As an administrative control, training is an important way that your workplace can communicate site rules and manage workplace hazards. In our last newsletter we looked into the three different learning styles – auditory, visual and kinaesthetic; in this edition of Building a Safe Workplace Together we take a quick look into memory retention.

Many psychology experiments have shown that our short-term memory can hold only a limited number of separate items. Depending on the individual, the average is about 7 items plus or minus 2. In contrast, our long-term memory indefinitely stores a seemingly unlimited amount of information.

With respect to this number of items, how you present information in training will impact what is recalled. By blocking like items (Scenario 2) you are able to increase the overall content being presented:

- Scenario 1 (14 items): N-Z-I-B-M-L-T-I-C-A-T-A-B-C
- Scenario 2 (5 items): NZ-IBM-LTI-CAT-ABC

This demonstrates the importance of structuring your training content into definite and meaningful chunks.

Work out what you want your attendees to take from the training. Then structure your training to limit the key messages to  $7 \pm 2$  items.

Unfortunately our short-term memory cannot retain information for much longer than 15 and 30 seconds. To remember something for longer, you must therefore repeat (or rehearse) it to yourself several times, or associate the information with something that allows you to modify your long-term memory. The longer the delay with this rehearsal or association, the less information is recalled. This is why including practical activities that facilitate rehearsal into your training sessions will improve the training output.

Think about your current training programs, which may include induction or Safe Work Practices (SWP). Has your organisation considered the limitations of short term memory in your training development programs? Or do you simply load your employees

up with large amounts of information and wonder why “they are so forgetful”?



## MANAGING SUMMER BASED HAZARDS

As summer draws near, workplaces where workers work outdoors or inside factories or sheds, should now be considering how they plan to manage heat stress, hydration and Ultra-Violet (UV) Radiation when working outdoors this summer. The extension of the definition regarding who is defined as a worker under the Harmonised Work Health and Safety Legislation should ensure workplaces that engage contractors also consider these risks when reviewing Job Safety Assessments (JSAs).

**What is heat stress?** Heat stress occurs when the body cannot sufficiently cool itself. Factors that contribute to heat stress in summer may include ambient temperature, humidity, air-movement, radiant heat, inappropriate clothing, and physical exertion.

Signs and symptoms of heat illness include feeling sick, nauseous, dizzy or weak. Workers who experience heat illness may also feel clumsy, collapse or experience convulsions. If symptoms occur, workers should immediately seek first-aid or medical assistance, rest in a cool and well-ventilated area, and drink cool fluids.

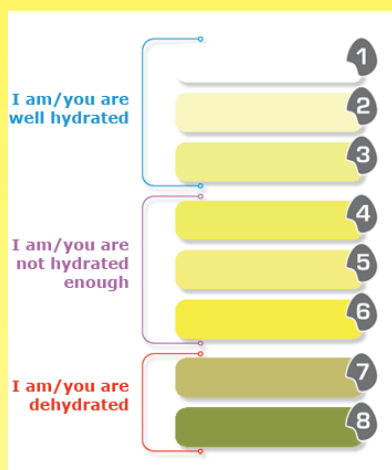
Workplace health and safety laws require the working environment, so far as is reasonably practicable, to be safe and without risks to health and safety. This includes illness from working in heat. Please note that whilst aligned to summer in this edition of Building a Safe Workplace Together, heat stress can occur all year round in work environments where hot work takes place.

**Preventing heat stress** – Heat stress can be minimised through the consideration and implementation of a number of controls. These include:

- Rescheduling tasks to ensure that tasks with a greater physical requirement are performed during the cooler parts of the day.
- Identifying methods to rotate between hot jobs or arranging/skilling more workers to share the job.
- Identifying, then procuring, mechanical aids (or plant) that may reduce physical exertion, or eliminate the requirement to work in the heat.
- Wearing light and loose-fitting clothing (preferably cotton) that provides adequate sun protection. Outdoor workers should be provided with PPE against UV radiation, such as wide brim hat, loose fitting, long-sleeved collared shirt and long pants, sunglasses and sunscreen.
- Providing fans or installing air conditioners or coolers to reduce air temperature and generate/increase air movement. Increased air movement will support evaporative cooling.

- Installing shade cloth, blinds or similar to reduce the radiant heat from the sun.
- Establishing defined rest and hydration breaks.
- Providing workers with information, instruction and training on heat-illness and on first aid.

**Hydration** – Providing cool drinking water near the work site should limit symptoms of heat stress. During hot weather, workers should be encouraged to drink a cup of water (about 200 mL) every 20 minutes. The need for water intake may also be determined by the worker by the colour of their urine.



**UV Radiation** - UV Radiation is a known cause of cancer and can have a number of harmful effects on the skin. There are two types of UV Radiation that have both been linked to skin cancer and a weakening of the immune system:

- UVA Radiation – Most often associated with heavily contributing to premature aging.
- UVB Radiation – Most often associated as the primary cause of sunburn.

**Is sunscreen the only answer?** Most sunscreens with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of 15 or higher do an excellent job of protecting the skin. SPF is a measure of a sunscreen's ability to prevent UVB from damaging the skin.

What does SPF mean and how does it work? Ok, let us say it takes 20 minutes for your unprotected skin to start turning red; using a SPF15 sunscreen theoretically prevents reddening for 15 times longer, therefore about five hours. Reapplication of SPF15 sunscreen after this 5 hour period will no longer protect the skin. In this scenario a SPF30 (or higher) sunscreen should be used. Regardless of the SPF rating, sunscreen should not be expected to stay effective for longer than two hours without reapplication.

When properly used, SPF15 protects the skin from 93% of UVB radiation (100% - 100%/15) and an SPF30 sunscreen provides 97% (100% - 100%/30). As no sunscreen will block out all UV rays, it would be incorrect to assume that sunscreen is the only answer. PPE as described above should be included in your UV Radiation hazard control plan.

## OHS HARMONISATION UPDATE

As outlined in our last edition of Building a Safe Workplace Together, New South Wales, Queensland, ACT, Northern Territory and the Commonwealth all commenced working in line with the uniform laws as of 1 January 2012 with Tasmania passing the laws to become operative on 1 January 2013.

Since then, South Australia and Western Australia have expressed intent to commence the harmonised WHS laws from 1 January 2013. Despite being the first and most vocal objector of the harmonised legislation, Western Australia committed to the WHS laws in their 2012/13 state budget. Victoria is now the only State yet to commit to implementing the model harmonised laws.

Operationally, your business should be focused on how they will manage the following significant changes:

- Expanded duty of care;
- Expanded consultation obligations; and
- Positive duties on “officers”.

If you would like assistance in understanding the operational approach that your business should take in light of the harmonised legislation, please contact us.

## RUN WITH US: MELBOURNE RUNNING FESTIVAL

The month of October brings on the Melbourne running festival. This is an annual event for the Action OHS Consulting Team. It is a time where we look to support others less fortunate. Following a member of our administration team being inspired at a recent conference, Action OHS Consulting is raising awareness of “Rotary Oceanic Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC)”. ROMAC has an inspirational mission “to provide medical treatment for children from developing countries in the form of life save and/or dignity restoring surgery not accessible to them in their home country.”

If you would like to run with us to help us raise money for this amazing cause, contact us by email ([info@actionohs.com.au](mailto:info@actionohs.com.au)) to receive the Team Code, and then enter the event in any of the distances (starting from a 3km walk). Alternatively, follow [this link](#) to make a donation. Please let us know by email if you have made a donation, this way we can acknowledge and thank you for your support.

