

INTRODUCTION

In this edition of 'Building a Safe Workplace Together' we take a look at the recent legislation changes that have taken place in Victoria and South Australia since 1 July 2014, and direct you to the current Codes of Practices endorsed by Safe Work Australia. We also take a look at the impact and inefficiency of paper in the office as businesses start to move toward cloud based systems of health and safety management, and look into the dangers of one "often forgotten" hazard in construction – silica dust.

We know this edition will provide you with additional knowledge and tools that will support your business in establishing and maintaining positive health and safety behaviours.

The next issue of 'Building a Safe Workplace Together' will be released in February 2014. Therefore, we wish you a happy and safe Christmas, and look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

As always, if you require any health and safety support – we hope you think of us.

OVERVIEW

- What have we been up to lately?
- Victorian Health and Safety Regulator Changes its Name
- Changes to the Victorian OHS Regulations
- Changes to the Victorian Workers Compensation Legislation
- Amendments to South Australian WHS Regulations
- Are you Familiar with the Model Codes of Practice?
- The Dangers of Silica Dust Exposure on Construction Sites
- The Impact and Inefficiency of Paper in the Office

WHAT HAVE WE BEEN UP TO LATELY?

Action OHS Consulting continues to work closely with our clients to build a safer workplace together. Some exciting projects undertaken since our last newsletter include:

- Engagement by Victorian Government Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) to manage its OHS and Workers Compensation Program. This is an exciting opportunity that will allow us to positively impact safety with DTF over the next few years.
- We have continued to commission our OHS Compliance Software and Online Module "Safe Workstation Setup". The feedback we have received has continued to be positive. But don't take our word for it – contact us to coordinate a software demonstration to see how you can simplify and automate safety management.
- Recent implementation of a workplace strengthening and stretching program that saw over 85% of the workplace participate, and all workers increase core strength over the first six (6) weeks.

VICTORIAN HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATOR CHANGES ITS NAME

WorkSafe Victoria as of 1 July 2014 will be known as Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA).

Minister Gordon Rich-Phillips has advised that the change was made to better reflect the work that is undertaken by the regulator, which has been, and continues to include:

- Helping avoid workplace injuries occurring
- Enforcing Victoria's occupational health and safety laws
- Helping injured workers back into the workforce
- Managing the workers' compensation scheme.



CHANGES TO THE VICTORIAN OHS REGULATIONS

To enable you to familiarise yourself with these changes, we have outlined the changes that clients have found to be of benefit below. Please review these changes on the Victorian WorkCover Authority [website](#), to identify what changes are specific to your organisation.

What items of plant do I need to register with VWA?

- You no longer need to register items of plant when purchased and renew every 5 years.
- If you manufacture or import certain types of plant and machinery you need to register the designs with VWA.
- If you alter the design of plant or machinery to the point that new control measures are necessary, the new design must be registered with the VWA.

Does an MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheet) need to be dated within 5 years?

- The requirement that an MSDS be checked at least every five years has been removed, so as not to confuse the obligation to ensure that it is current. An employer will be required to ensure that a "current" MSDS is supplied to its workplace, and that it is readily accessible to any employee who may be exposed to the substance.
- Note: A 'Safety Data Sheet' (SDS) is the same as an MSDS.

Do I need a High Risk Work licence to maintain plant such as forklifts?

- You do not need a licence to work with plant to test, install, commission, maintain or prepare the plant.
- You do need a high risk work licence if you work with scaffolding, dogging or rigging for maintenance.
- You do need a licence to drive or operate the plant e.g. to load on or off a transportation vehicle.

CHANGES VICTORIAN WORKERS COMPENSATION LEGISLATION

- From 1 July, WorkCover laws in Victoria also changed. The Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013 (the WIRC Act) became operational on 1 July 2014. The WIRC Act recasts the Accident Compensation Act 1985 and the Accident Compensation (WorkCover Insurance) Act 1993 into a single Act that is simpler and easier to use. The WIRC Act does not change the benefits available, nor does it change the way that premium is calculated. However, under the WIRC Act, employers now have to apply to Victorian Workcover Authority (VWA) for a workers' compensation policy (automatic for employers with pre-existing policies). In addition, employers now have the right to contest Workers Compensation premium valuations at VCAT. To read more about the WIRC Act click [here](#).
- If you have any questions, please direct these to your Workers Compensation Agent

AMENDMENTS TO SOUTH AUSTRALIAN WHS REGULATIONS

The Work Health and Safety Variation Regulations 2014 (Variation Regulations) contain minor technical changes that have been made to the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) (WHS Regulations). The amendments clarify policy intent, and address workability issues that have been identified and agreed through the nationally agreed process.

The Variation Regulations also make consequential amendments arising from the end of transitional arrangements that were put in place when the WHS Regulations were first made. These include:

- The insertion of a fee for asbestos assessor licences
- Extending the transitional arrangements for air monitoring requirements for class B asbestos removal, and the exemption for tractors manufactured, imported or originally purchased before 1981 from the requirement to be fitted with a roll-over protective structure
- Extending the date for the introduction of a hazardous chemicals notification scheme.

FREE OHS CONSULTATIONS

Does your business employ less than 200 employees? You may be eligible.

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HAVE A 'SAFE' CHRISTMAS

Is Christmas a period where new employees are hired or temps are engaged to cope with your increased demand? If so, how do you ensure that they are appropriately trained before letting them loose into the hustle and bustle of Christmas? Workers 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.

Do you have a plan that will keep your people safe?

ONLINE SHOP

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Ergonomic chairs & equipment, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), First Aid Kits & the ability to support your visitor management needs. Can't find it? Let us know what you need.



ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THE MODEL CODES OF PRACTICE?

Codes of practice are practical guides to achieving the standards of health, safety and welfare required under the Health and Safety Act and Regulations in a jurisdiction.

To have legal effect in a jurisdiction, a Code of Practice must be approved as a Code of Practice in that jurisdiction. To determine if a model Code of Practice has been approved in a particular jurisdiction, check with the relevant health and safety regulator.

Below is a list of the current Model Codes of Practice issued by Safe Work Australia (SWA). Identify which Codes of Practice apply to you. If you require assistance in locating a specific Code of Practice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

- How to Safely Remove Asbestos
- How to Manage and Control Asbestos in the Workplace
- Abrasive Blasting
- Confined Spaces
- Construction Work
- Work Health and Safety Consultation Co-operation and Co-ordination
- Demolition Work
- Managing Electrical Risks at the Workplace
- Excavation Work
- Managing the risk of Falls at Workplaces
- Preventing Falls in Housing Construction
- Managing the Work Environment and Facilities
- First Aid in the Workplace
- Labelling of Workplace Hazardous Chemicals
- Preparation of Safety Data Sheets for Hazardous Chemicals
- Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace
- Hazardous Manual Tasks
- Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work
- Managing Risks of Plant in the Workplace
- How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks
- Safe Design of Structures
- Spray Painting and Powder Coating
- Welding Processes.

THE DANGERS OF SILICA DUST EXPOSURE ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

Employers and Workers are encouraged to consider the risks posed by exposure to silica dust on construction sites.

In managing site safety, it is natural to firstly address the typical risks associated with the construction industry. These include work at heights, electrical safety, traffic management and structural stability issues among others. A failure to properly control these risks may lead to serious injury or fatality.

However, significant risk to workers is also posed by exposure to silica dust which can cause irritation to the eyes, nose and throat like most other dusts, resulting in tearing, sneezing or coughing. Inhalation of very fine (respirable) crystalline silica dust can also cause irreversible scarring of the lungs – a disease called silicosis.

There is no medical treatment to treat or reverse silicosis. The long term effects can be debilitating, leading to an inability to work and loss of quality of life. People with silicosis are also at greater risk of developing bronchitis and lung cancer.

Typical products which contain silica include concrete, mortar, clay bricks, calcium silicate bricks, and both concrete and terracotta roof tiles. Mechanical cutting or grinding of these products is likely to generate significant volumes of respirable silica dust. The risk of persons inhaling this dust must, so far as is possible, be eliminated or minimised.

The best and preferred way to eliminate dust is to adopt alternative work practices which do not require the use of power tools. Other controls include the use of tools with water supply for dust suppression or the use of tools with dust extraction systems; (however these are often less effective than the water suppression tools).

Where it is not reasonably practicable to use the above methods, or where the use of such tools does not reduce exposure sufficiently, respiratory protective equipment should be used in accordance with:

- AS/NZS 1716 – Respiratory protective devices
- AS/NZS 1715 – Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective devices.

As a minimum, a **P1 dust mask** would be suitable. Workers must receive appropriate instruction on the safe use of all the measures selected to control the risk of silica dust exposure.

Did you know that the Code of Practice 'First Aid in the Workplace' guides workplaces to offer all first aiders a Hepatitis B virus vaccination?

THE IMPACT AND INEFFICIENCY OF PAPER IN THE OFFICE

According to PricewaterhouseCoopers, finding a lost document will cost a company \$122 on average. It is also estimated that 7.5% of all company documents are lost completely. Let's assume your company works with 10,000 documents – an extremely light figure. That would mean, about 750 of those documents are doomed to be lost, ultimately costing your company around \$91,500. Plus, if you had to recreate any lost documents, the time and supplies involved would make that number jump well over the \$100,000 mark.

Or what if a customer calls in with questions about a specific invoice? With a paper based filing system, the employee taking the call would have to hang up, walk to the storage area, search for that specific invoice, walk back to their desk and return the call. What if they need a copy? Then that employee must walk over to the fax machine, send a copy, return to the storage area and refill the document. This process can take up to 20 minutes for one simple question.

One three drawer filing cabinet costs around \$300, holds 9,000 pages of documents and requires about 2 m² of office space. As retention periods are becoming longer and paper documents continue to influx daily, many businesses will then have to acquire additional filing cabinets and eventually purchase an off-site storage area. A relatively small storage space will cost about \$150 per month, not to mention the utilities involved (electricity and lighting, etc.). PricewaterhouseCoopers reports that, on average, a company spends \$25,000 to fill one file cabinet and an additional \$2,100 a year to maintain that cabinet. The fees quickly add up.

The costs associated with finding and retrieving documents may seem invisible, but managing paper files is an everyday cost to businesses. It has been estimated that searching for documents takes about 20% of an employee's time. Let's say you have 20 employees, all with access to search and retrieve documents. At 20%, the accumulative time spent finding documents is equal to 4 full-time employees. Consider you pay \$40K in annual salaries per employee, that's \$160,000 every year in productivity lost by using a paper based filing system.

Statistics show that 3% of an organisation's documents are misfiled. Not only does this cause confusion within the office, but it also leads to poor customer service and miscommunication internally. With paper documents, an employee will spend more than double the time looking for a document than they spend reading it once it is found. On average, PWC reports that an employee spends about 15

minutes filing a document properly. With a paper based system, when an employee making \$20 per hour spends one hour each day on filing, they are wasting over 250 hours and \$5,000 annually. By going paperless, this time could be spent on more useful tasks to bring in more money, rather than wasting it.

Replacing paper in the office with a digital solution can save you money when working with suppliers by organising and consolidating payment procedures. By creating electronic document workflows, you can ensure workplace health and safety activities are delivered in a timely manner, and where they are not delivered, management are notified and/or have vision.

It's time to consider going paperless in order to take your organisation to the next level. Not only will you save the high costs of paper storage and management, but users can easily streamline everyday business processes while remaining environmentally conscious.

Our web-based compliance software has had a face lift. Utilising HTML 5 technology, our software remains up-to-date with the latest internet technology around mobile products.

