



Easy HR™

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**Easy HR™ Newsletter
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Easy HR™ - Did You Know ...

Easy HR offers **Accident Investigation** courses. The Easy HR Accident Investigation training course is designed specifically for Workplace Health and Safety Officers who may be required to investigate workplace accidents. This course gives Accident Investigators the basic investigation skills needed to carry out workplace accident and incident investigations. Courses run from 9am to approximately 1pm.

From a simple **manual handling** briefing to full competency based training. We can help you develop a customised manual handling training program that can be held at your workplace (Our trainers will travel).. These courses provide participants with the basic knowledge and skills to apply the provisions of the NSW OHS law regarding manual handling, and to familiarise participants with the manual handling code of Practice. For employees this includes participation in the process of identifying, assessing and controlling manual handling risks. Supervisors and line managers should also have the skills and knowledge required to implement a program of identification, assessment and control within the context of an overall manual handling system.

Easy HR is able to offer you nationally accredited:

- Manual Handling training
- General Safety Induction Training
- Certificate 4 in Occupational Health & Safety (By Distance Education)
- Diploma In Occupational Health & Safety (By Distance Education)

Please call our office or visit our website for more information:

<http://www.easyhr.com.au/training/training.htm>

Famous Last words

Jean Sylvain BAILLY (1736-1793)

Jean Bailly, a member of the French Academy of Sciences, became the first revolutionary mayor of Paris in 1789. Eventually, however, the reign of terror ensnared him and he was sentenced to death. On the scaffold, awaiting the guillotine, he was heckled by a spectator who noticed that he was trembling. His last words: "Only from the cold, my friend."

Get Sun Smart

Community concern about the risk of skin cancer from overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation has been given renewed focus with the recent death of a young anti-cancer campaigner.

The woman's death from melanoma happened just as the hazardous UV season starts in the southern hemisphere. This is the time of the year when employers need to make sure their outdoor workers "cover-up" to protect them from ultraviolet (UV) exposure.

From September onwards, ultraviolet (UV) exposure levels for Australian workers can reach levels that are high enough to cause skin damage, which is a skin cancer risk. UV levels will stay at high levels until the end of next April.

Those who spend all or part of their day working outdoors are at risk of skin cancer. They should use a combination of sun protection measures - shade, clothing, hat, sunnies and sunscreen.

The SunSmart program offers a workplace education program for employers on the hazards of sun exposure, including practical solutions to sun protection and early detection of skin cancer.

Resources: <http://www.sunsmart.com.au/resources.asp#posters>

Resources: <http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/>

Tidbit: Egyptian shepherds made the first sunscreen from castor beans as early as 7800 BC.

National Code of Practice for Induction for Construction Work unveiled

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Joe Hockey, has unveiled the National Code of Practice for Induction for Construction Work.

Mr Hockey said the code is a clear example of the government's commitment to reduce the regulatory burden for employers as it replaces a multitude of induction processes that currently exist in the states and territories with a single, nationally agreed approach.

The code is now available to be downloaded from the Australian Safety and Compensation Council's (ASCC) website.

<http://www.ascc.gov.au/ascc/AboutUs/Publications/NationalStandards/NationalCodeofPracticeforInductionforConstructionWork.htm>

Sydney Trucking Fatality Leads To New Safety Regime

Lessons learned from a fatal incident at a Sydney truck depot have resulted in a major trucking company introducing an impressive array of new safety systems to protect its employees.

A truck driver employed by Western Freight Management received fatal injuries In December 2004 at the Unanderra depot of Star Track Express Pty Ltd when crushed by a reversing truck.

The NSW Industrial Court has found Star Track Express guilty on two charges relating to risk assessment and safe work systems brought by WorkCover NSW under section 8(2) of the Occupational Health & Safety Act 2000.

WorkCover NSW Chief Executive Officer, Jon Blackwell, said today that Star Track had failed to design a safe work system which took into account the risks likely to occur in a busy truck depot.

“The court found that the risks, which existed before the incident, were both obvious and foreseeable,” said Mr Blackwell.

“The absence of a traffic plan to manage movement of pedestrians and trucks in the confined space of the Unanderra depot, the absence of high visibility vests and a faulty truck reversing beeper were all contributing factors,” he said.

“However, the company has learned from this terrible tragedy and now has an impressive array of safety systems in place, as well as moving its Unanderra operation to a better designed site,” said Mr Blackwell.

Star Track Express Pty Ltd, which employs 1,375 employees at 11 depots, was fined \$150,000.

Source: Workcover NSW

Hmmm

In 2002 firefighters were called to put out the flames at a factory in Neuruppin, Germany. What did the factory make? Fire extinguishers. But the fire extinguishers were filled with flame retardant at another facility, so at the time of the fire none of them worked.

New Tools Released By The Workplace Ombudsman

New tools are now available free of charge from the Workplace Ombudsman to help employers comply with time and wages record-keeping and pay slip requirements and encourage best practices. To help employers meet their compliance obligations, the Workplace Ombudsman has developed a series of interactive templates for employee details, time and wages worksheets, leave records and pay slips.

New interactive templates for employee details, time and wages worksheets, leave records and pay slips are available at:

<http://www.wo.gov.au/asp/index.asp?sid=7407&page=fact-sheets-view&cid=5371&id=764>

These new tools are just some of many resources available to employers and employees to help them achieve compliance with Commonwealth workplace relations laws.

Visit the website www.wo.gov.au for:

- Detailed fact sheets,
- On line "Live Help" chat service with a member of the Workplace Ombudsman,
- "Contact Us" email enquiry service,
- On line complaint lodgement,
- Information on audits and campaigns, and
- A wide range of reference materials and links.

\$8000 Penalty For Vic Education Department

The Department of Education was fined \$8000 in a Victorian Magistrates Court after it failed to comply with a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN Notice) issued by a health and safety representative in 2004, and Improvement Notice issued by WorkSafe in 2005. The Magistrate noted that despite the school principal making the Department aware of the PIN and the Improvement, the Department did not seek a review or comply with the notices.

WorkSafe Victoria General Manager Eric Windholz said the fine by Magistrate O'Day sent an important message that WorkSafe Victoria and the courts will act against employers who do not respect the role of Health & Safety representatives and WorkSafe Inspectors".

"Health and safety representatives are a crucial element in making Victorian workplaces safer and when they raise issues of safety employers must listen and act" Mr Windholz said.

"This is the first time that an employer has been found guilty for ignoring a Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN Notice) placed by an employee".

The prosecution occurred after a health and safety representative at Altona Primary School issued a PIN Notice in December 2004 alleging that the Department of Education had failed to provide adequate facilities for the welfare of the workers.

The notice related to the school teachers' lunch room which the court heard was too small for the number of teachers using it, allegations later supported by Department of Education occupational health and safety consultants.

The risk to employees included scalding from hot beverages, trips and slips and stress and low morale resulting from a noisy and overcrowded environment.

In September 2005, nine months later, a WorkSafe Inspector issued an Improvement Notice to the Department for failing to remedy the breaches of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 identified in the PIN Notice. WorkSafe's Improvement Notice required the provision of a portable classroom, which would allow an existing classroom to be refurbished to provide appropriate space for all staff.

Mr Windholz said failing to obey the directions of Inspectors was an extremely serious offence. "It doesn't matter if it is a manufacturing company, a construction site or a school, safety must be taken seriously".

"Any company that ignores the directions of an Inspector can face fines of more than \$250,000".

Background: A Provisional Improvement Notice (PIN) notifies an OHS breach to an employer. They are issued by an employee who is elected as the health and safety representative by the employees. The person issued with the PIN must act on the notice or if there is a disagreement, either party can call in WorkSafe to consider the matter within 7 days. If they are called the WorkSafe Victoria inspectors can uphold, vary or cancel the PIN Notice. The WorkSafe inspector can also issue an Improvement Notice, requiring something to be done within an agreed period if the OHS breach is still present. The Person served with an Improvement Notice has a right to seek a review of the notice.

Source: Workcover Victoria

Maintenance Warning After Employer Fined \$50 000

A Kerang business owner has been fined \$50,000, without conviction, in the County Court after an employee was crushed and later died when an excavator bucket suddenly closed on him in June last year.

The maximum fine for an individual under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 is \$189,000.

Keith William Chirnside, who operates Kerfab Industries Pty Ltd, pleaded guilty to failing to provide and maintain a safe workplace. The company makes and repairs agricultural and earth moving machinery.

The Office of Public Prosecutions told Judge Geoffrey Chettle that Ron Frost was replacing the steel lining of a front end loader bucket which closed on him. Another man's hand was hurt as he tried to free Mr Frost.

The Director of WorkSafe's Manufacturing Logistics and Agriculture program, Trevor Martin, said maintenance and repair work was among the most dangerous.

"Repair and maintenance work invariably means something is not as it should be, and consequently the risks need to be tightly controlled.

"We know from investigating many serious incidents each year that almost all workplace deaths and serious injuries involve people doing routine tasks.

"Improvisation is not innovation. Just because a task has been done 100 or 1000 times without incident does not mean it is safe. What it does mean is that you've previously been lucky."

"These incidents have enormous impact, particularly in regional communities where people are often friends or relatives of their workmates.

Charges against Mr Chirnside's wife, Allison Margaret Chirnside were withdrawn at the Magistrate's Court committal hearing in July.

Source: Workcover Victoria

Exploding Wheelbarrow Tyre Takes Out Eye

Using air compressors to inflate small tyres could lead to serious injuries, WorkSafe Victoria has warned.

A 27-year-old Warrnambool man lost an eye and suffered a head injury after a new wheel-barrow wheel exploded as he inflated it using a compressor at a local business.

The wheel-barrow wheel was made up of two rim halves which were bolted together. It is thought one of the rim-halves may have hit the man in the head as the tube exploded.

A 73-year-old man died in Melbourne in November 1997 when a wheel-barrow tyre exploded and hit him in the chest as he inflated it at a Melbourne service station.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said these incidents should not be dismissed as 'freak accidents'.

"Wheel-barrow wheels are typically sold as a complete unit and should be inflated using a hand pump.

"Compressors in workshops or at service stations are designed to inflate car and truck tyres, or operate a piece of equipment. They should be used for the purpose intended.

Recognising the dangers of compressed air explosions, professional car and truck tyre fitters often have access to cages in which tyres are inflated.

WorkSafe Victoria recommends:

- Using a foot pump rather than compressed air to inflate wheelbarrow or similar tyres;
- Only inflating tyres to the pressure recommended by the manufacturer;
- When replacing a wheel assembly use the replacement recommended by the manufacturer;
- Only inflating wheelbarrow tyres when installed on the wheelbarrow as the frame may provide some protection;
- Not inflating tyres on wheels with damaged or rusted rims;
- Maintaining compressors and pressure gauges as recommended by the manufacturer(s).

Source: Worcover Victoria

A Very Bunny Story

After running over a rabbit, the motorist stopped to try and make its last moments more comfortable. She was joined by another motorist who was a pharmacist who happened to be driving by.

You know," said the pharmacist, "I think I may have something that will help this little fellow." Rushing back to his van, he returned with a bottle and poured the contents down the furry thing's throat. Suddenly, the animal's ears perked, its nose twitched, and it bounded off.

Amazed the motorist said, "What on earth did you give that rabbit?"

"What do you think?" said the pharmacist. "Hare restorer."

Workcover NSW Gets tough on Drugs

WorkCover NSW Chief Executive Officer, Jon Blackwell, today announced the launch of a new fact sheet to assist employers address the misuse of alcohol and other drug use in the workplace.

The new fact sheet, Establishing a policy to manage alcohol and other drugs in the workplace, acts as a step-by-step guide for small and medium-sized businesses on how to develop a policy for managing the misuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace.

"The misuse of alcohol and drugs at work is an important issue that affects workers and employers, and can contribute to productivity losses, absenteeism and lateness, anti-social behaviour, and unlawful conduct.

"Workers affected by drugs or alcohol at work not only jeopardise their own safety, they place their colleagues and others in the workplace at risk," said Mr Blackwell

"Employers and workers need to be aware of the potential consequences associated with the misuse of drugs and alcohol, and the potential serious consequences for workplace health and safety, such as an increased risk of injury.

Mr Blackwell said the fact sheet provides practical and workable solutions, and encourages both employers and workers to manage risks associated with drug and alcohol use by adopting a preventative approach.

"The fact sheet will help employers develop a guide that is tailored to their individual workplace and highlights the importance of developing a written alcohol and other drugs policy in close consultation with their workers," he said.

"Employers are encouraged to provide education, and to use counselling, treatment services and support programs as appropriate risk-management tools for controlling alcohol and drugs in the workplace.

"WorkCover is committed to assisting businesses understand and meet their workplace safety and workers compensation responsibilities," Mr Blackwell said.

Further information on how to establish a workplace alcohol and other drugs policy is available in the Alcohol and Other Drugs in the Workplace guide, released in February this year.

The fact sheet and guide were developed in consultation with key industry stakeholders, including employers, unions and health workers.

The guidance material is consistent with the outcomes of the 2003 NSW Summit on alcohol abuse: Changing the Culture of Alcohol Use in NSW, and the State Plan goal of achieving healthier NSW communities through reduced illicit drug use and risk drinking.

Both the fact sheet and guide are now available from the WorkCover website.

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/OHS/SafetyGuides/establishing_policy_manage_alcohol_other_drugs_workplace.htm

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/OHS/RiskManagement/drugs_alcohol_workplace.htm

Shrek Broke My Back

The Ergonomics Society has highlighted how the science of designing with human comfort in mind helped the ogres at a theme park in Orlando, Florida.

On its website, the Ergonomics Society describes how the performers portraying Shrek at Universal Orlando were suffering from shoulder, neck and lower back pains.

Workers were finding it difficult to wear the Shrek costume for long periods without experiencing aches and pains and suffering from heat exhaustion.

The original costume design had reportedly resulted in 21 first-aid cases, 26 recordable injuries, 622 light duty days, and 49 restricted or lost work days from June 2004 to March 2006, with a direct cost of over \$80,000.

In order to improve the working life of the performers, the costume became the subject of an ergonomic study and it was decided a redesign of the costume was necessary.

Issues identified were said to include the weight of the costume, the body positioning in the costume, ventilation and visibility.

The designers made some key changes to the costumes including:

- discarding the harness, which was deemed to be the heaviest component and replacing it with lighter materials
- removing additional non-essential layers to further reduce the weight of the costume
- separating the head of the costume from the body to allow better movement and balance, as well as improved visibility and better body and head positioning
- designing a ventilation opening at the back of the head to allow for air flow, assisted by a battery-powered pancake fan.

After the changes were implemented, injuries fell to zero, with no lost time, and the Shrek suit was entered for the Ergo Cup, an annual competition run by the Institute of Industrial Engineers in the US.

Employee Killed While Changing Light bulb

Inadequate training, a lack of protective equipment and poor work procedures has led to a conviction and \$300,000 fine for the employer of a man who died while changing a light bulb.

"Other employers must learn from this company's mistakes, WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said. "As this company demonstrated safety improvements can be achieved quickly, but you don't have to wait until someone dies. It's little consolation for families when it's done after the event.

Camden Neon Pty Ltd manufactures and carries out maintenance on display signage. It pleaded guilty to one charge laid under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004.

Sion Rees, 26, of Sunbury died in hospital four days after receiving an electric shock as he removed broken glass from a live' light fitting at a Coburg North car yard in April last year.

He had not been provided with protective gloves and was using an uninsulated screwdriver.

Passing sentence today, Judge Sue Pullen said the company's working practices were grossly inadequate or non-existent. "Simple procedures could have prevented the death of this young man....it was only good luck that there had not been a fatality before. As in this case, Camden Neon employees routinely left the power on when they carried out sign maintenance. The firm also did not have a tag and lock out procedure for use when working with electricity.

There was no written job safety analysis or work permit system before electrical work was done and employees had inadequate information, instruction and training in relation to the safe operation of the elevating work platform (EWP).

Mr Rees' workmate who was in the EWP with him generally worked in the company's factory and was new to this particular job. He did not know how to operate the EWP when Mr Rees was shocked.

Mr Merritt said Parliament significantly increased fines under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004, reflecting the community's view that workplace safety was a serious issue.

This was the second workplace fatality case heard at the County Court under the new' Act which increased the maximum fine from \$250,000 to more than \$990,000.

Source: Workcover Victoria

Do You Have a Fat Wallet?

This is one of those things that you might wonder if it's an urban legend or medical myth. Nope. This one is true--your wallet can cause sciatica!

Although most people consider a fat wallet stuffed with business cards and scraps of paper more of an eyesore than a health hazard, if you carry one of these in your back pocket, you might want to keep the number of a good back specialist in there too, because the theory that wallets can cause leg and back pain is true.

The phenomenon was first described in an article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in 1966, just as credit cards were beginning to proliferate. The report was about a lawyer who suffered aches and pains in his left leg, not far from where he kept a wallet that in the previous three years had been growing thick with charge cards.

"Recently, he learned that removal of the wallet from his left hip pocket brought relief, and reinsertion of the fat wallet reproduced the symptoms," the report said.

The patient's condition was described as "credit- carditis." Unfortunately that term never quite caught on as a medical diagnosis, but countless reports of similar cases have followed, and doctors say the condition has become increasingly common in the past few decades. Now, it is sometimes referred to as "back-pocket sciatica."

The onset of the condition is gradual, caused not only by wallets but by any object that presses on the piriformis muscle in the buttocks, which is connected to the sciatic nerve that runs down the leg. Over time, if you're developing the condition, you'll feel pain radiating down your back and hip area.

Wallets are not the only culprits. According to the medical literature, one man developed the condition from carrying a bunch of handkerchiefs in his back pocket during hay fever season. Another developed it from keeping golf balls in his back pocket on the course.

But fortunately, unlike a lot of other back problems, this one has a very quick and simple remedy. It's referred to by doctors as a "walleectomy."

Sources: *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Never Shower In A Thunderstorm* by Anahad O'Connor, *The Lancet*

Help Yourself

Burton finally got to jump, and after leaping from the plane, he pulled his ripcord. Much to his horror, the chute failed to deploy. Refusing to panic, Burton pulled his emergency cord. Again nothing happened.

Now he panicked. Just then, however, he saw a woman rushing up toward him.

Hope filled his breast, and when she was within shouting distance, Burton hollered, "Hey! Do you know anything about parachutes?"

"No!" the woman shouted back. "Do you know anything about gas ovens?"

Flogging a Dead Horse

Dakota tribal wisdom says that when you discover you are riding a dead horse, the best strategy is to dismount and walk. However, we often try other strategies with dead horses, including the following:

1. Buy a stronger whip.
2. Change riders.
3. Say things like, "This is the way we have always have ridden this horse."
4. Appoint a committee to study the horse.
5. Arrange to visit other sites to see how they ride dead horses.
6. Rewrite the standards for dead horse performance.
7. Appoint a tiger team to revive the dead horse.
8. Create a training session to increase riding ability.
9. Compare the state of dead horses in today's environment.
10. Change the requirements, declaring that, "This horse is not dead."
11. Hire contractors to ride the dead horse.
12. Harness several dead horses together to increase speed and pulling power.
13. Declare that, "No horse is too dead to beat."
14. Provide additional incentive funding to increase the horse's performance.
15. Do a Commercial Activities Study to see if contractors can ride it cheaper.
16. Purchase a software product to make dead horses run faster.
17. Declare the horse is "better, faster, and cheaper" dead.
18. Form a quality circle to find uses for dead horses.
19. Revisit the performance requirements for horses.
20. Say this horse was procured with cost as an independent variable.
21. Promote the dead horse to a supervisory position.
22. Shorten the track.
23. Establish benchmarks for industry dead-horse leaders.
24. Put together a spiffy PowerPoint presentation to get planners to double the dead-horse R&D budget.
25. Get the horse a website.
26. Declare that the horse is not in fact dead, but poised for growth.
27. Sell off its ears to reduce overheads.
28. Re-organize the horse to make it more customer-facing, by cutting off its head and sewing it on backwards.
29. Declare that since horse is dead, we must now ride smarter, not harder.
30. Sell off the horse's legs one by one, until someone will buy it.
31. Declare that riding is not a core competency.

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