

WORKCOVER NEWS

The workplace safety and injury management magazine

51

Dec 2002-Feb 2003

- **Special Feature - NSW Government Response to Workplace Safety Summit**
- **2002 Premium Discount Scheme Awards Winners Announced**
- **Official Opening of WorkCover NSW Head Office**
- **WorkCover NSW Sponsorship Program for Paralympic Athletes**



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Manager



THE LAST THREE MONTHS HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH, AND SAFETY AND WORKERS COMPENSATION WITHIN NSW.

On 22 November 2002, the NSW Special Minister of State and Minister for Industrial Relations, the Hon. John Della Bosca MLC, launched the Government's formal response to the Workplace Safety Summit.

Minister Della Bosca told an audience of union and business leaders at Penrith, that the Government had responded with a substantial \$13m package to achieve a safer NSW.

In delivering the formal Government response, the Minister said a three-year program of safety initiatives would focus on developing practical solutions to prevent injury in high-risk areas. Further details of the Government's comprehensive response are included in this issue of *WorkCover News* as a feature article.

WorkCover's inaugural Premium Discount Scheme Awards were held on 26 November 2002 and awards were presented to employers who have strived to improve workplace safety. Businesses nominated for the awards had qualified for significant workers compensation premium rebates — with nine businesses earning the maximum discount of \$75,000 on their premiums as a result of improvements in their OHS performance.

A *Utilities Manual Handling Resource Kit*, developed by WorkCover NSW's Utilities Industry Reference Group, was recently launched. The Kit is designed to assist supervisors to effectively manage workplace manual handling issues.

The GP Education Program on back pain was launched in November 2002 and will provide 2,000 general practitioners across the State with the latest advice on the treatment of acute low back pain to give workers the best treatment and to help them back to a normal life.

In addition, WorkCover has made a smooth transition to its new head office in Gosford on the NSW Central Coast. WorkCover will continue to provide efficient and high quality service to all of our stakeholders throughout NSW.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kate McKenzie', written in a cursive style.

KATE McKENZIE

General Manager
WorkCover NSW

Manual Handling Resource Kit

ON FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER 2002, NSW SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, THE HON. JOHN DELLA BOSCA MLC,

launched the *Utilities Manual Handling Resource Kit* at Eraring Power Station on the NSW Central Coast. The project is an industry safety initiative developed by WorkCover's Utilities Industry Reference Group.

The Kit was developed following a review of the workers compensation statistical data that showed that manual handling incidents and injuries represent the highest percentage of all workers compensation costs. In the five-year period 1996/97 to 2000/01 there were 5,383 manual handling claims in the utilities industry costing \$40,066,000. The Utilities IRG Manual Handling working group surveyed the industry and established that many of the respondents did not have any type of risk assessment or manual handling programs in place and often lacked the expertise and resources to implement such a program.

The development of the Kit drew on the knowledge and experience of organisations that have already implemented manual handling programs. It provides guidance to develop and implement manual handling programs based on the principles of risk management. It also contains a set of resources, including a model process, to assist managers and supervisors to effectively manage workplace manual handling issues. The case studies and guidelines in the Kit help to identify potential manual handling hazards, assess the risks and develop appropriate solutions to eliminate and control those risks and improve workplace safety.

The video in the Kit, entitled, *Counting the Costs*, will help create awareness of the significance of manual handling injuries in the workplace and the impact they have upon workers, their families and colleagues. This awareness will help establish the right environment to ensure the success of the manual handling program.

"This project provides an excellent example of a cooperative approach by industry, unions and government to the health and safety of workers", said Minister Della Bosca

The tragic accidents highlighted in the video demonstrate the need for workers and employers to assess the risks involved in the work they are to undertake, to plan the work and use appropriate equipment. It should never be assumed that the one standard piece of equipment or work process is the right one for every job. It is important that employers, in consultation with the workers, assess the risks on each particular job to determine the correct equipment or work process that will enable them to complete the job safely.

Improving workplace safety often requires changing fundamental attitudes and behaviour. The *Utilities Manual Handling Resource Kit* can help organisations achieve this by showing managers, supervisors and workers how to establish a thorough approach to risk management.

Although this project focuses on the needs of the utilities industry, the resources in the Kit can easily be applied to organisations in other NSW industries.

Minister Della Bosca said in conclusion, "this project provides an excellent example of a cooperative approach by industry, unions and government to the health and safety of workers in the utilities industry".

To learn more about the *Utilities Manual Handling Resource Kit* contact WorkCover NSW's Information line on 13 10 50 or to obtain a Kit, call our Publications Hotline on 1300 799 003 and ask for Publication #1200.



WorkCover NSW Gosford **Head** Office Opening



"Three and a half years ago, I pledged WorkCover's relocation to the Central Coast ... today, I'm pleased to report: project delivered," said Premier of NSW, Bob Carr.

ON 15 OCTOBER 2002 PREMIER BOB CARR OFFICIALLY OPENED THE NEW WORKCOVER NSW HEAD OFFICE HELPING TO REVITALISE GOSFORD'S CITY CENTRE.

The building will be home to over 500 employees, who formerly worked in the Sydney CBD. This initiative by the NSW Government is one of the most comprehensive staff relocation programs undertaken by a Government department.

Over 200 Central Coast residents worked on the Donnison Street site and \$11.3m in subcontracting work was carried out by regional businesses. That figure climbed significantly during the fit-out stage.

Central Coast businesses were invited to supply WorkCover's new headquarters in Gosford with a large range of goods and services. Special Minister of State, Minister for Industrial Relations and Minister Assisting the Premier for the Central Coast, the Hon. John Della Bosca MLC, said the relocation of the personnel to the building would provide a major boost to the city and its businesses.

"This is the opportunity for local firms to provide printing, cleaning, catering, security and newsagency services, as well as motor vehicle maintenance and indoor plant hire.

WorkCover's call for goods and service providers follows a boom for the local construction industry."

At the official opening of the new WorkCover Head Office in Donnison Street, Gosford the Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr said, "Three and a half years ago, I pledged WorkCover's relocation to the Central Coast ... today, I'm pleased to

report: project delivered. WorkCover is part of the State Government's plan for jobs and the urban renaissance for Gosford's Central Business District."

Mr Carr said that this move will be one of the most important economic developments for this area of NSW and "will create even more local jobs as local businesses will provide printing, cleaning, catering, security and motor vehicle maintenance services to WorkCover". The Premier also pointed to the fact that this move will mean hundreds of people shopping in the centre of Gosford and, thereby, giving a tremendous boost to the local economy.

Premier Carr said that this relocation was "part of the State Government's plan to move Government departments and agencies out of Sydney" and that it "also affirms Gosford's role as one of the State's most important regional centres".

The new \$30m state-of-the-art, five-storey building will also house the Long Service Payments Corporation.

Minister for Public Works and Services, the Hon. Morris Iemma, said the project was an advertisement for the Central Coast and its construction industry.

"The New South Wales Government's Regional Infrastructure Development Plan sets a target of 75% local content.

The Gosford WorkCover building reached 87%, which demonstrates the quality and skills available in the region."

WorkCover NSW has a 10-year lease on the building with two five-year options.

Education on **Back Pain**

for General Practitioners

GIVING WORKERS THE BEST TREATMENT TO HELP THEM BACK TO A NORMAL LIFE IS AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE OF WORKCOVER'S 2001 LEGISLATIVE REFORM PACKAGE. Back injuries account for a third of all NSW workers compensation claims. The Special Minister of State, the Hon. John Della Bosca MLC, recently launched a \$1.7m education program for general practitioners (GPs) as part of the implementation of the reform package. This program will help ensure that injured workers who have acute low back pain will receive treatment that delivers the best health and occupational outcomes. In partnership with Alliance of New South Wales Divisions, the program will provide 2,000 GPs across the State with the latest advice on the treatment of acute low back pain within the first six weeks.

THE EDUCATION PROGRAM WILL:

- Ensure that NSW GPs are aware of current evidence on effective management of acute low back pain and provide them with increased confidence in their ability to manage this condition
- Ensure that injured workers in the NSW Workers Compensation System are managed according to best available evidence
- Identify workers who may have more serious conditions or who may be at risk of developing a chronic condition
- Reduce exposure of injured workers to unnecessary interventions
- Ensure improved recovery rates and improved return to work for injured workers

The education program includes a set of evidence-based clinical guidelines that have been developed in consultation with top medical experts and institutions. The latest information shows that extended rest is often not the best treatment for back injuries.

As well as managing acute low back pain, the new program will also target side effects, including depression, reduced fitness and the loss of employment opportunities.

During 2001, the education program successfully piloted in Wagga Wagga and Western Sydney. It is now being rolled out to GPs in the Central West and Far West of NSW, the Mid and Far North Coast, the Central Coast, the St George area of Sydney, the Canterbury-Bankstown area, the Illawarra, the Murray-Riverina and Western Sydney.

The first phase of the 18-month program will afford GPs the opportunity to participate in a range of evening seminars, and have access to face-to-face contact with GP educators, as well as an interactive website. Following an evaluation of the first phase of the program, consideration will be given to extending the program further.

At the launch of the program, Minister Della Bosca, congratulated the Alliance organisation for working with WorkCover in helping to assist doctors to improve their skills to ensure that workers in NSW get the best possible treatment for their work-related injuries.

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2002 Premium Discount Scheme Awards



Hunter Nursing Agencies
Regional Small/Medium Employer

Marrickville Council
Metropolitan Large Employer and Employer of the Year

Weir Engineering Pty Ltd
Regional Large Employer

ON 26 NOVEMBER 2002, THE NSW SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, THE HON. JOHN DELLA BOSCA MLC, ANNOUNCED THAT MARRICKVILLE COUNCIL WON “EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR” as well as the metropolitan large employer category award at WorkCover’s inaugural Premium Discount Scheme Awards. The Council, with a diverse workforce of about 500 people, provides a broad range of services, including engineering, community, town planning, waste, civil works and childcare.

The Premium Discount Scheme (PDS), is an innovative WorkCover initiative introduced in June 2001 as part of the Minister’s 10-point reform package for the NSW workers compensation scheme.

During its first year, the voluntary Scheme has attracted over 850 employers who have received \$21m in premium rebates. The average discount is \$21,154. Among the 15 finalists, nine earned maximum discounts on their workers compensation premiums of \$75,000. By continually improving their OHS and injury management (IM) systems to meet WorkCover benchmarks, the finalists will derive further discounts over the next two years. Beyond that, cost savings are expected to accrue from fewer claims and better management of those claims.

The Scheme is ongoing and Minister Della Bosca encouraged all employers in high-risk industries (ie, manufacturing, health and community services, property and business services and construction) and those with a history of poor claims, to take advantage of the PDS and accrue the long-term benefits.

Not only do employers benefit from the Scheme, so too do workers. Many companies who were short-listed for these awards channel the money they save from the PDS back into the management and improvement of their OHS and IM systems. During the first year, the PDS initiative has meant safer working conditions for more than 121,000 workers in NSW.

Since entering the PDS, Marrickville Council has experienced an 82% reduction in the number of days lost due to workplace injuries and almost a 40% reduction in its workers compensation premium. As well as using the PDS as an external assessment of its OHS and IM systems, the Council has found it to be a useful promotional tool to acknowledge those staff members who contributed to altering the adverse premium trends that were commonplace before the Scheme was implemented.

Weir Engineering Pty Ltd, regional winner of the large employer category, designs and manufactures a variety of pumps and valves, and offers a range of engineering services. With a 120-strong workforce, it was convinced on three fronts (social, commercial and regulatory) that the PDS would provide a catalyst for the company to create a safer workplace. Not only does it enjoy a 15% discount on its premium but also, the company has dramatically reduced its “lost time frequency rate” and, consequently, its cost of claims. The staff members are now keenly aware of OHS issues and, when tendering for contracts, management invariably highlights its outstanding OHS and IM systems.

The winner of the regional small/medium employer category, Hunter Nursing Agencies, is a family-owned and operated nursing employment service. Founded in 1983 by two sisters and their parents, the agency now employs more than 220 staff. It offers a home nursing service, provides hospitals and nursing homes with casual relief staff and supplies the Newcastle industrial sector with occupational health staff. The PDS affords it a discount on its premium of almost \$17,000 and, since joining the Scheme, the agency has introduced a risk management system that has resulted in a substantial decrease in workplace accidents, particularly accidents involving manual handling.

This year, there was no award in the metropolitan small/medium employer category.

Highly commended finalists in the large employer metropolitan and regional categories were Estée Lauder Pty Ltd, Anglican Care and Moree Plains Shire Council.

Estée Lauder Pty Ltd, one of the world's leading manufacturers and marketers of quality skin care, makeup, fragrance and hair care products, was attracted to the PDS by the benchmarking opportunity, the discipline of annual audits and the focus on long-term sustainable improvement in all aspects of workplace safety. It now boasts regular OHS training, an OHS awareness newsletter, induction packs for store managers and a personalised incident reporting process that provides immediate response and feedback.

Anglican Care, with a 500-strong workforce, provides accommodation for elderly people. Part of the Diocese of Newcastle, it has three nursing homes, five hostels, self-care units, service apartments and a Day Therapy Centre in the Newcastle area and new facilities are due for construction on the Central Coast and at Jesmond. The PDS affords it a 15% discount on its workers compensation premium and these savings are channelled into OHS initiatives, such as staff training and providing specialised equipment.

Moree Plains Shire Council provides a wide range of services, including water and waste, sporting facilities, swimming pools, road construction and maintenance, bushfire prevention and childcare facilities, as well as a tourist office and a regional library. The \$75,000 cost savings that the Council generated from its first year in the PDS has been invested in improving its OHS and IM systems. Seventeen members of its staff have been specially trained as return-to-work coordinators to ensure that injured workers are returned safely and quickly to their normal duties.

Those present at the award ceremony were unanimous in heralding the Scheme as an important management tool that not only impacted the company's bottom line but also, was

instrumental in enhancing staff morale through better and safer work practices. Minister Della Bosca predicted that the 2003 Premium Discount Scheme Awards might be expanded to recognise those companies who excelled in their particular industry sector and include additional awards for small/medium enterprises.

PDS Awards 2002 Finalists and Premium Discount Advisers



FINALISTS FOR THE 2002 PREMIUM DISCOUNT SCHEME AWARDS INCLUDED:

- Air International Transit Pty Ltd
- Ampcontrol
- Anglican Care
- CRT Group Pty Ltd
- Estée Lauder Pty Ltd
- Forbes Services Memorial Club
- Great Lakes Community Resources Incorporated
- HPM Industries Pty Ltd
- Hunter Nursing Agencies
- Macquarie Textiles Group Limited
- Marrickville Council
- Moree Plains Shire Council
- SunRice
- Weir Engineering Pty Ltd
- Woy Woy Community Aged Care

SchoolSafe Project

WORKCOVER NSW'S GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND EDUCATION TEAM HAS RECENTLY COMMENCED SCHOOLSAFE, an education industry project focused on making schools safer and healthier places for school staff, students and all people who visit them. SchoolSafe is focused on NSW Public Schools run by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and involves both primary and secondary schools.

The education industry is a significant employer in NSW, with the Public School system comprising the largest part of this industry, employing around 80,000 staff across the State. On a daily basis in excess of 760,000 students participate in a wide variety of learning activities across its more than 2,300 school sites. Additionally, DET workplaces are accessed daily by substantial numbers of contracted and volunteer workers, as well as parents, to both maintain the Department's assets and generally support the education system in many ways.

SchoolSafe will see WorkCover officers visiting DET workplaces and speaking with personnel, across all levels of the organisation, including 60 schools, 12 district offices, key specialist directorates and senior management. Schools of all types, sizes and profiles and in most areas of NSW are being visited as the project's first phase. Participating schools were selected to represent the diversity of students, teaching staff, course activities and health and safety risks that can be found across such a large number of school sites.

School visits are the basis for the project and comprise several information gathering activities, including interviews with the Principal and OHS employee representatives at each school, as well as a workplace inspection involving all parties, looking at areas including classrooms, industrial arts rooms, farms, science labs and workshops. This activity provides an opportunity for school staff and WorkCover officers to exchange information on a range of health and safety issues



and for WorkCover to provide informal and formal advice on corrective actions that may be required to promote a safer working and learning environment for staff and students. The school visits provide an opportunity to view, at operational level, how current systems are working and to work with those staff involved in the day-to-day running of the school, to identify how current systems can be improved.

The overall focus of *SchoolSafe*, however, is not on the individual participating schools, district offices or any other single workplace. All DET workplaces being visited are being utilised as windows to view the operation of DET's current OHS and injury management (IM) systems across all organisational levels and to identify any improvement possibilities. *SchoolSafe* aims to promote industry-wide improvement, to ensure both long-term integrity and benefit for all of DET's approximately 2,300 school workplaces.

Collaboration is a central aspect of *SchoolSafe*. A steering group comprising senior representatives of WorkCover NSW and the many industry stakeholders is guiding the project. This includes DET, the NSW Teachers Federation, the NSW Public Service Association, Secondary Principals Council and the Primary Principals Association as well as other interested parties.

When compiled and analysed, *SchoolSafe* findings will provide DET and stakeholders with insights into the operation of current OHS and IM systems. It will provide an additional source of information that DET can utilise in further developing and enhancing its current systems and practices. It is expected that a final report will be complete by June 2003.

Hot Topic 37: Employment & The Law

THIS IS THE LATEST IN THE SERIES *HOT TOPICS: LEGAL ISSUES IN PLAIN LANGUAGE*, PUBLISHED BY THE LEGAL INFORMATION ACCESS CENTRE (LIAC). *Hot Topics* aims to give an accessible introduction to an area of law that is the subject of change or public debate.

This *Hot Topic* (written jointly by WorkCover, the Department of Industrial Relations and Professor Adrian Brooks, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales and edited by Cathy Hammer, LIAC) provides information on the legal aspects of employment - both rights and responsibilities. Although it

applies to anyone in employment, this *Hot Topic* focuses on issues facing young people entering the workforce or already in employment. It examines the different laws that regulate the stages of employment: applying for a job; the contract of employment; and termination of employment. It also looks at some of the difficulties that may be encountered as an employee and the entitlements due to an employee, including where to go for help.

Subscriptions to *Hot Topics: legal issues in plain language* can be obtained by contacting LIAC on 02 9273 1645.

Paralympian

Sponsorship Program 2002/03

WORKCOVER NSW PROUDLY SPONSORS FIVE TALENTED PARALYMPIC ATHLETES THROUGH ITS PARALYMPIAN SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM. Each athlete was injured in the workplace and is available through the program to share their inspirational stories and promote the workplace safety message.

Athletes participating in the Paralympian Sponsorship Program attend workplaces, industry groups, conferences, media events or annual dinners to give first-hand accounts of how their accident occurred. They also discuss measures that could have been taken to prevent their accident and outline their efforts to return to the workforce.

Through their presentations, the athletes deliver the message that workplace safety is the responsibility of both employers and workers.

One of the five courageous Paralympic athletes featured in the program is Nigel Smith.

Although sport was always an important part of Nigel Smith's life, he never thought he would participate in international competitions. Then again, he never thought he would lose a leg in a workplace accident.

"Before my accident I was involved in a few different sports including rugby league, cricket and golf. Then in December 1993, I was involved in a heavy industrial accident where my left leg was caught in a chain conveyor on an industrial paint machine. I had multiple fractures and extensive tissue loss to my left leg."

Over the next three months, Nigel had 13 operations to try and save his leg. Unfortunately, his leg didn't respond to treatment and had to be amputated. Soon after Nigel returned to work with the same company, where he still works today.

"It was about another five months before I was up and about with a prosthetic leg, but even before that, I was able to get out and play golf again. Not much could keep me away from the golf course."

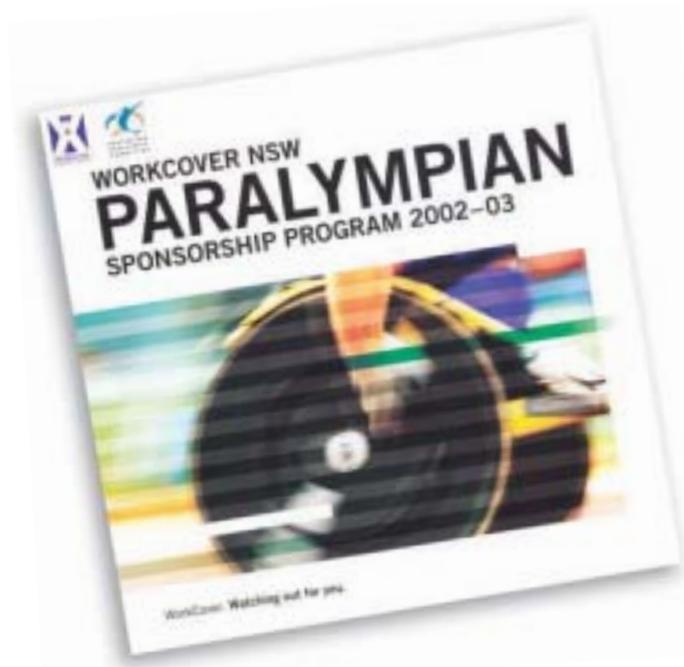
In 1997 he developed an interest in volleyball and first represented Australia in the World Championships for standing volleyball in Poland in 1998. In 1999 Nigel was selected to represent Australia in competition in Canada, and later in that same year played in the Southern Cross Tournament in Sydney. He was then selected to play for Australia at the Sydney 2000 Paralympic Games.

"This was a dream, I couldn't believe I was representing my country, in my hometown, in a sport I had never even considered before my accident."

Since Sydney 2000, Nigel has continued to play volleyball in first division able-bodied competition and he hopes to compete in the 2004 Paralympic Games in Athens.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE PARALYMPIAN SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

To learn more about WorkCover NSW's Paralympian Sponsorship Program 2002/03 please contact Janelle Carr, Corporate Relations Branch on 02 4321 5478 or, for a brochure, call our Publications Hotline on 1300 799 003 and ask for Publication #202.



NSW Government's Response to the Workplace Safety Summit 2002



Industry and union representatives at the launch of the NSW Government's response to the Workplace Safety Summit 2002.

ON 22 NOVEMBER 2002, THE NSW SPECIAL MINISTER OF STATE AND MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, THE HON. JOHN DELLA BOSCA MLC, IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKPLACE SAFETY SUMMIT, LAUNCHED THE GOVERNMENT'S THREE-YEAR BLITZ ON WORKPLACE SAFETY.

Minister Della Bosca told an audience of union and business leaders at Penrith, that the Government had responded with a substantial \$13m package to achieve a safer NSW. The Minister indicated that the recommendations of the Summit were aimed at reducing workplace injuries by at least 40% and fatalities by 20% over the next 10 years.

"Achievement of these targets will mean fewer injuries for tens of thousands of workers, reduce the burden on their families and result in hundreds of millions of dollars in savings to businesses and the community," said the Minister.

In delivering the formal Government response, Minister Della Bosca said a three-year program of safety initiatives would focus on developing practical solutions to prevent injury in high-risk areas.

"The Government has adopted the majority of the 132 recommendations made by the 200 representatives of unions, employers, professional and community groups,

government and international experts brought together in Bathurst to tackle the workplace safety issues confronting this State," he said.

The Government's comprehensive response includes:

- A Safer Towns and Cities program in which Government agencies will provide OHS leadership and guidance in areas of regional NSW
- An extension of the Premium Discount Scheme (Small Business Strategy) to not-for-profit organisations
- An extension of WorkCover's Rollover Protective Structures Rebate Scheme (ROPS) to June 2003
- A new Workplace Fatality Investigation Unit within WorkCover to support expert investigation of workplace fatalities. The Attorney General is also being consulted about the making of a sentencing guideline for OHS prosecutions
- Integrating basic safety and risk management principles into the curriculums for school children
- An extension to the popular YouthSafe program
- Making OHS competency a prerequisite for holding building or liquor licences



Minister Della Bosca and industry and union leaders discuss the Government's three-year plan to promote workplace safety in NSW.

- Research into the issue of managing work related stress
- Amendments to the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2001* to give contractors in the long haul trucking industry better protection against unrealistic timetables. In consultation with industry, consideration will also be given to extending these provisions to other industries
- Helping employers and employees work together to find new solutions by funding five industry-specific forums and a new Forestry Industry Safety Council.

"The NSW Workplace Safety Summit helped to create a strong partnership between unions, employers and Government to achieve safer workplaces, fewer injuries and fatalities," said Minister Della Bosca.

A copy of the Government's response can be downloaded from the WorkCover NSW website: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au. Industry-specific actions include:

SAFE DESIGN INDUSTRY

Establishment of a Safe Design Advisory Council (including senior representatives of relevant Government departments and the Design Profession) and:

- Convening a Safe Design Industry Forum to address initiatives undertaken by industry
- Sponsoring Design Industry Awards that recognise Safe Design

- Initiating discussions with the Design Profession and the University sector to incorporate Safe Design in the tertiary curriculum
- Ensuring Safe Design is addressed by all Australian Standards.

COMMUNITY SERVICES INDUSTRY

Working with the Community Services Industry to:

- Convene an Industry Forum to address key OHS issues
- Conduct research about managing work related stress
- Integrate OHS competencies into accreditation standards
- Extend the Premium Discount Scheme (Small Business Strategy) to not-for-profit community organisations.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Working with the Construction Industry to:

- Include OHS competency requirements as a condition of obtaining building and associated licenses
- Conduct a targeted compliance program in high-risk sectors
- Ensure OHS requirements are met in Government project contracts in high-risk sectors

EDUCATION INDUSTRY

Working with the Education sector to:

- Conduct research to identify and promote good risk management practice
- Support the training of Workplace Safety Committees and OHS representatives
- Support two industry forums addressing bullying and workplace violence and stress
- Make materials available on the Internet to assist Registered Training Organisation Staff.

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Implementation of the *Code of Practice: Safety in Forest Harvesting Operations* in consultation with the Forestry and Harvesting Industry, and establishment of a Forestry Industry Safety Council to monitor progress in reaching its targets.

HEALTH SERVICES INDUSTRY

Working with the Health Services Industry to:

- Convene a forum about safe design of Health Services' accommodation
- Conduct research into causes and negative impacts of stress
- Inform industry about issues and priorities emerging from compliance activities
- Provide relevant information to assist in developing prevention programs

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

Working with the Hospitality Industry to:

- Develop and implement an appropriate communication strategy
- Distribute guidance material to assist business deal with workplace violence and armed hold-ups

- Develop a Workplace Safety Kit for small businesses in the Restaurant and Catering Industry
- Develop a Workplace Health and Safety Management Program for hotels, licensed clubs and motels
- Conduct research study about immigrant workers in NSW
- Make OHS competency a prerequisite for holding liquor licences.

MANUFACTURING

Working with the Manufacturing Industry to:

- Conduct pilot programs on high-risk areas of wood and metal fabrication, machinery and equipment
- Develop checklists on OHS responsibilities for outworkers, labour hire and itinerant workers
- Develop a campaign to implement an intervention strategy focusing on manual handling and noise exposure risks for outworkers



Kate McKenzie, General Manager WorkCover NSW, at the Government's response to the Workplace Safety Summit.

RETAIL AND WHOLESALE INDUSTRY

Working with the Retail and Wholesale Industry to:

- Convene a forum to consider OHS issues and solutions for small business
- Develop a project to support the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry reduce hazards including manual handling hazards
- Give small businesses more access to OHS information and training
- Undertake safety audits of targeted, high-risk local businesses
- Provide information about risk management approaches to deal with workplace violence



RURAL INDUSTRY

Working with the Rural Industry to:

- Introduce education campaigns across the industry
- Improve risk management training through initiatives such as WorkCover's PDS

The Government will also co-ordinate a Safer Towns and Cities program involving a number of Government agencies to provide guidance on safety to rural and regional communities, and extend the successful Rollover Protection Scheme until June 2003.

TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

Working with the Transport Industry to:

- Create an industry forum comprising all regulatory agencies
- Initiate consultations in relation to the proposed Memorandum of Understanding
- Develop a joint industry/Government action plan to address key workplace safety issues in the Transport Industry

The Government will also amend the *OHS Act 2001* to give contractors in the long haul trucking industry better protection against unrealistic timetables. In consultation with industry, consideration will also be given to extending these provisions to other industries.

"Achievement of these [safety] targets will mean fewer injuries for tens of thousands of workers [and] reduce the burden on their families," said Minister Della Bosca.

Code of Practice: **Safety**

in Forest Harvesting Operations

A NEW INDUSTRY CODE OF PRACTICE: SAFETY IN FOREST HARVESTING OPERATIONS WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON 1 JANUARY 2003. The new Code, which replaces the *Code of Practice, Snigging Logs* and the *Code of Practice for Loading, Unloading and Securing of Logs To Log Haulage Vehicles*, will assist employers, workers and others involved in activities associated with the harvesting of timber logs in meeting their legislative obligations for health and safety. The Code of Practice is the result of extensive and continuing consultation with a wide range of industry organisations including harvesting contractors, haulage contractors, mill owners, union officials and government agencies.

The Code was developed over the period December 2000 through August 2002, with several meetings of the working group comprising stakeholders from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Australian Workers Union, Transport Workers Union, State Forests of NSW, Timber Trades Industrial Association, Eden Logging & Investigation Training Team, Forest Products Association, Forest Industry Council, WorkCover's Manufacturing Industry Reference Group and WorkCover Inspectors. During this period the group set about clarifying the approach, content and technical details of the Code. The working group decided to preview the Code with employer/worker focus groups in Bega, Tumut, Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour to clarify practical and technical issues, and to determine whether the Code was accurate and helpful to users.

The focus groups were very positive about the Code's readability, practicality and presentation. On the basis of their feedback the Code was further refined and finalised for public comment. The Code was released for public comment in late 2001.

The Code provides a guide to general consultation, training and managing workplace risks. It puts this information into practical contexts of manual and mechanical harvesting, extraction, loading, unloading, securing and transporting of cut logs. Rather than listing a great number of technical requirements and detailed specifications, the Code focuses on providing an easy-to-follow, practical guidance for forest industry employers in managing workplace risks in

consultation with their workers. It provides information about how to plan work activities with a focus on workplace safety and how to consult with, and coordinate activities involving, multiple contractors. It also tells employers how to identify the hazards that might arise in the course of their activities, assess the risks the hazards might present and devise effective methods to eliminate or control the risks. The Code emphasises a consultative approach to allow employers to meet their legal obligations in a way that suits their particular circumstances, thus allowing businesses to better manage risks in the workplace.



Photo: State Forests of NSW

Clubs 2001 Project



IN NSW, THE REGISTERED CLUBS INDUSTRY EMPLOYS ALMOST 40,000 PEOPLE, while 2.5 million people are members of a club and a staggering 80% of the State's population visited a club in the past 12 months.

However, workers compensation claims data indicates that the total cost of claims as a result of workplace injury and disease for the clubs industry was \$8.6m in 1997/98, rising to \$11.8m by 1999/2000.

Given the cost of claims, number of people employed, the large number of visitors to clubs and the long hours of operation, it's important that employers are aware of their occupational health and safety (OHS), workers compensation (WC) and injury management (IM) obligations. This was the impetus for the Clubs 2001 Project.

A pilot project in the Illawarra area between October 2000 and February 2001 was conducted to trial the proposed approach and to test for expected outcomes.

The subsequent project involved 20 registered clubs in the Illawarra and South Sydney area. Clubs were selected by size and type to reflect the industry profile as well as a mixture of good and poor performers in terms of OHS, WC and IM.

The aim of the project was to raise the level of OHS, WC and IM awareness among employers in the registered clubs industry to help improve compliance and reduce injury and disease rates for their workers.

The project involved qualitative data gathered during work site visits by WorkCover inspectors between June and December 2001. As compliance does not necessarily correspond with level of awareness, two methods of data collection were used, pre- and post-questionnaires and a compliance checklist. The data collected helped to focus on high-risk hazards in the clubs industry.

During the worksite visits, inspectors asked employers and workers at each club a series of questions in order to measure their baseline level of awareness prior to any intervention. With the aid of a specifically designed checklist, inspectors verified compliance in five categories via a workplace inspection: OHS Management Systems; Workers Compensation and Injury Management; Manual Handling; Access/Egress; and Plant.

Following completion of the checklist, an extensive feedback session was conducted with each employer to report back on their performance, areas of potential risk and the areas for improvement. The session aimed to promote the adoption of an organised approach to managing OHS, WC and IM and increase the level of employers' awareness and compliance. Up to three months after the work site visits levels of awareness were measured again via another questionnaire to measure changes.

Checklist results for the five categories showed that:

1. OHS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- Only 15% of participant clubs had documented policies and procedures relating to management commitment to OHS
- General OHS consultation processes were in place however there was potential for improvements
- Formalised procedures for reporting OHS issues needed improvement in 80% of participants
- Most participant clubs needed to increase their knowledge of the risk assessment process in order to better manage risks
- Specific training programs in 80% of participants required upgrading in the Manual Handling and risk assessment components

- Hazardous substances procedures needed to be documented
- Most participant clubs needed to develop or review their documented procedures for the management of workplace violence and aggression
- 75% of participants needed to increase their focus on appropriate noise management policies and procedures

2. WORKERS COMPENSATION AND INJURY MANAGEMENT

- 20% of participant clubs had no injury register
- Employees at 95% of participants were aware of the procedures for notification of injury and illness
- Employers at 95% of participant clubs were aware of notification requirements when a worker has been injured or becomes ill
- Return to Work Programs for 45% of participants need to be upgraded

3. MANUAL HANDLING

- 60% of participant clubs needed to improve their Manual Handling procedures
- Manual Handling risk assessments needed to be upgraded in 75% of participants
- Staff were generally aware of Manual Handling risk factors however training strategies need reviewing

4. ACCESS/EGRESS

- 5% of participant clubs had floor surfaces which posed a risk to the health and safety of those in the workplace

5. PLANT

- Documented procedures for maintenance and sign-offs from maintenance contractors required upgrading
- Most participants incorrectly assume compliance in meeting approved standards and legislation from suppliers of plant when it was purchased and needed to increase awareness of their own legal obligations
- 40% of all improvement notices were issued for plant. The majority of these were for inadequate guarding, especially in relation to the belt drive on the compressor of old-style refrigeration units.

The results were consistent between employers and workers. They highlighted that the industry's approach to OHS was generally informal and reactive and policies and procedures required improvement.

Ninety-two per cent of clubs reported that they implemented changes to improve their approach to the management of OHS since WorkCover NSW's intervention through the project. This includes the implementation of policies, procedures, in particular, Manual Handling and OHS policies. Some clubs have used the project as an impetus to upgrade their existing procedures. Participants reported that WorkCover's intervention and the recent legislative changes to OHS assisted them the most to bring about those changes.

Forty-seven per cent of participants reported that their club had implemented changes to improve WC and IM since WorkCover's intervention. This includes: increased signage; policies and procedures; establishment of Return to Work Programs; and dissemination of relevant information to staff.

Clubs reported that the major barriers to implementing improvements in OHS, WC and IM were: time; resources; and Senior Management or Board commitment. Smaller clubs reported having greater difficulties due to limited resources.

The overall perception from the post-questionnaires was that clubs were happy to be involved in the project and receive workplace-specific guidance from WorkCover. One employer stated that being involved in the Clubs 2001 Project "opened [their] eyes to the policies and procedures needed to be developed" in order to manage OHS in an organised way. The clubs indicated that they would welcome further assistance and guidance to develop policies and procedures in order to address safety issues.

The project outcomes indicated that a significant increase in level of awareness was achieved as a result of improvements the participant clubs made to OHS, WC and IM during the course of the project.

The findings indicate the club industry's need for further education and access to information in order to overcome the barriers to further improvement. For WorkCover, the project has highlighted priority risks for the industry that will assist in the future planning of strategic intervention activities to assist clubs in producing safe and secure workplaces.

Joint Cross-Border

Cotton Gin Project

IN BORDER REGIONS INDUSTRIES MAY CONDUCT BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN TWO STATES AND ARE THEREFORE SUBJECT TO DIFFERING LAWS AND REGULATIONS.

To help deliver a consistent occupational health and safety (OHS) message for industries within a cross-border environment, a collaborative compliance project is under way with the cotton ginning industry in North West New South Wales and South West Queensland.

Following successes in other cross-border initiatives between WorkCover NSW and the Qld Division of Workplace Health and Safety in a wine industry project, senior managers of both organisations met in Brisbane in February 2002 to discuss further collaborative approaches to improve compliance for industries and employers working either side of the NSW/Qld border.

The cotton ginning industry was chosen for the first collaborative project. Cotton ginning involves removing cottonseeds and other foreign matter from the new cotton. The cotton is then baled and transported to cotton processing mills. The industry was chosen due to the relatively high rate of serious incidents and higher than average workers compensation premiums. Between 1992/3 and 2000/01 in NSW and Qld there were several deaths and over 700 claims costing more than \$5m. The major OHS

issues are manual handling, plant and vehicles, falls (both at height and on same level) and noise.

In addition, WorkCover NSW funded an education project in 2001 that developed and produced an OHS training program for the industry. This program is available on WorkCover's Internet site (www.workcover.nsw.gov.au). The Cotton Safe Project provided a framework for the implementation of an organised OHS management program based on the principles of risk management. WorkCover NSW was interested in assessing awareness of the information within the industry. It was decided to set up a working group to help the project move forward.

The working group for the Joint Cross-Border Cotton Gin Project held its first meeting in Moree early in August 2002. Also participating in the working group were representatives from the Australian Agricultural Health Centre, based in Moree, who have extensive knowledge of the Cotton Industry Commodity Group (a significant player in the industry who have been very active in the promotion of OHS).

At the meeting agreement was reached on a project proposal that incorporates an evaluation of the Cotton Safe Project's impact on the ginning industry in North Western NSW and South Western Qld.



THE FEATURES OF THE PROJECT ARE:

- Consultative discussions with ginning companies on OHS issues of concern to create a dialogue between the regulators and the industry
- Compliance with legal obligations while operating cross-border
- A self-assessment survey by individual gins of their OHS systems
- Further discussions on compliance with all industry stakeholders
- Follow up site visits of selected gins by Qld and NSW inspectors

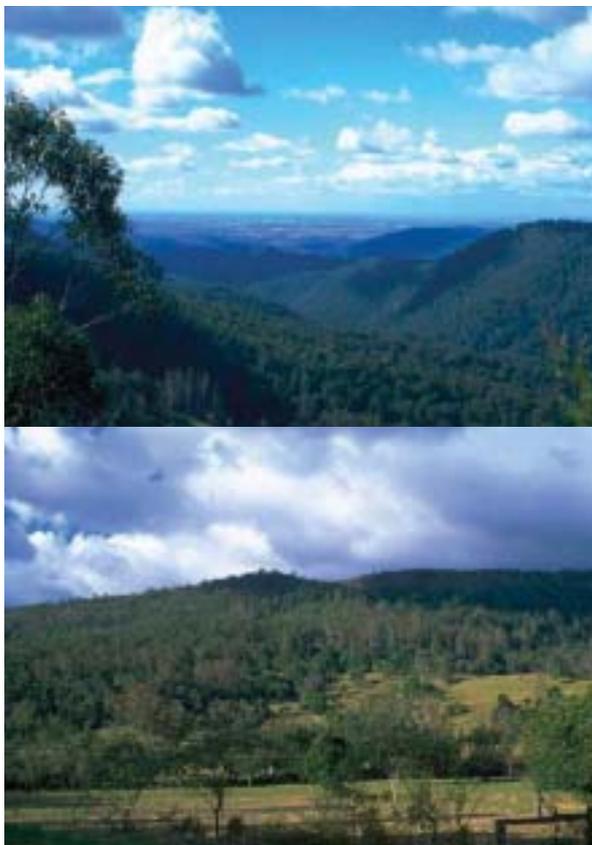
Joint site visits will be conducted between NSW and Qld Government inspectors to improve cross-border working relationships. These visits aim to assist the industry in improving its OHS performance and reduce the impact from injury and illness.

The first consultative discussions were held with 40 representatives of the ginning industry on 1 October 2002 in Moree. A subsequent meeting with stakeholders took place on 7 November and the following matters were discussed.

- The purpose of the self-assessment survey for gins on their OHS performance to set an industry baseline, with individual gin results to be kept confidential
- The primary causes of injury in the industry based on workers compensation claims data from NSW and Qld
- The legislation in both States governing compliance
- Employment of seasonal labour by ginning companies during the season, such as use of employment agencies
- OHS roles and responsibilities of manufacturers, importers, suppliers and installers of plant and equipment
- Ginning companies duty of care to contractors and non-employees visiting workplaces

- Fatigue management during the ginning season as gins operate on a continuous basis for up to four months
- OHS skills development and consultation for the industry
- What to expect during site visits by inspectors during the project

All participants considered these meetings to have been very successful. The companies are now aware that there will be a consistent approach applied by inspectors in both NSW and Qld. In fact, the companies are very interested in receiving feedback on the outcomes of the field component when it is completed.



Workplace fatalities & injuries

WORKER DIES IN ELECTRICAL ACCIDENT

A 38-year-old man was electrocuted while installing an electrical fan/heater/light assembly in a bathroom at a rural property. The man was on the roof of the building and had taken a sheet of iron off the roof to gain access to the ceiling space above the bathroom when the accident occurred.

CHILD DROWNS ON FARM

A four-year-old boy drowned in a holding tank connected to the greenhouse at a hydroponic farm.

FATAL TRACTOR ACCIDENT

A 49-year-old man sustained fatal injuries when a tractor he was driving overturned and crushed him. The man was using the tractor to clear vegetation at a poultry farm.

WORKER DIES ON DEMOLITION SITE

A man operating a cherry picker at a demolition site received fatal crush injuries from falling rubble when an unexpected collapse occurred. The man was taking part in an induced collapse procedure in preparation for the removal of a suspended boiler at the site.

VOLUNTEER RURAL FIRE OFFICER KILLED

A 52-year-old volunteer rural fire officer sustained fatal injuries when struck by a large falling section of tree while patrolling during a hazard reduction burn.

APPRENTICE PLUMBER ELECTROCUTED

A 19-year-old apprentice plumber was electrocuted while attempting to connect a hot water system in a private residence.

WORKER KILLED IN FALL

A 17-year-old man was fatally injured when he fell from the top of a large water tanker that was being positioned onto the back of a prime mover at a site believed to be occupied by a quarry.

FATAL INJURIES ON CONSTRUCTION SITE

Five workers were injured, two fatally, when the roof of a water tower that was being installed collapsed during a concrete pour.

FARM HAND DIES

A 32-year-old farm hand was found dead in a shower at accommodation provided for him on a rural property. Investigations are underway to determine whether he was electrocuted or died of natural causes.

JACKEROO RECEIVES CRUSH INJURIES

A 19-year-old jackeroo sustained fatal injuries when he was crushed between a silo and an auger while transferring grain to a truck.

HOBBY FARMER KILLED

A 58-year-old self-employed hobby farmer was found with fatal crush injuries under a quad bike that he had been using to muster cattle on his property.

Disclaimer: These reports are of a preliminary nature and are based only on initial reports from WorkCover inspectors. Full details of incidents will be available after the completion of coronial and other processes. No liability on the part of any parties referred to herein can be inferred from these reports.

Prosecution Highlights

WORKER'S BRIDGE FALL BRINGS \$310,000 IN FINES

Companies: Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd and Boone & Willard Plumbing Pty Ltd

Fine amount: \$310,000

Inspector: Dennis Howard

Case details: Multiplex Constructions and a plumbing sub-contractor have been fined a total of \$310,000 by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission sitting in court session following a seven-metre fall by a worker at the Finger Wharf site, Woolloomooloo Bay.

On 29 October 1999, a 26-year-old plumber employed by Boone & Willard Plumbing Pty Ltd was severely injured when he fell from the level 3-link bridge at the Finger Wharf construction site while installing a fire hydrant pipe.

A WorkCover investigation revealed that the injured plumber and other workers on the link bridge were unaware that Multiplex Constructions Pty Ltd had declared it a prohibited area.

Both companies pleaded guilty to breaches of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 1983* Multiplex to Section 16(1) and Boone & Willard to Section 15(1) of the Act.

WASTE FIRM FINED \$155,000 OVER COMPACTOR DEATH

Company: JR & EG Richards Pty Ltd (trading as JR Richards & Sons)

Fine amount: \$155,000

Inspector: Colin West

Case details: A Tuncurry-based waste disposal firm has been fined \$155,000 by the NSW Industrial Relations Commission sitting in court session after an employee was crushed to death inside a garbage compactor truck.

The 46-year-old man was fatally crushed while working alone clearing garbage from inside the truck at the company's Port Macquarie waste management and recycling depot on 15 December 1999.

WorkCover investigations showed that a proximity switch that should have disabled the compactor blade while the operator was inside, failed to operate correctly, contributing to the incident.

JR & EG Richards Pty Ltd (trading as JR Richards & Sons) pleaded guilty to two charges under Section 15(1) of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act 1983* by failing to provide information, training, supervision and a safe system of work to ensure the health and safety of the employee.

Disclaimer: This list is a selection of cases and does not represent all prosecutions undertaken and/or resolved by WorkCover NSW (under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1983*) in the three months since WorkCover News was last published.

Stop Press



WORKCOVER NSW, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CMSOLUTIONS (A DIVISION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND SERVICES), HAS RECENTLY UPGRADED ITS PUBLICATIONS SERVICE. Key aspects of the new service include:

- A new hotline number
- An online catalogue listing all current publications and prices
- One free copy of any publication to members of the public
- A new user-pays pricing system
- Access to bulk orders at a discount rate for organisations
- Delivery within five days of ordering, usually 48 hours within the Sydney Metropolitan area

The new service aims to deliver high quality publications more efficiently to WorkCover's clients. In addition to the single free copy of any publication that is available to all members of the public, multiple and bulk copies are now available for a small fee calculated on a cost recovery basis. DL Brochures and posters remain free of charge for up to 1,000 copies.

WorkCover NSW and cmSolutions are already receiving enthusiastic customer feedback about improved document quality and delivery times under the new system.

Customers are also able to obtain single copies of many publications from WorkCover offices.

HOW TO USE THE NEW SERVICE

Look up the WorkCover catalogue online from our website at www.workcover.nsw.gov.au or cmSolutions' site at www.cms.dpws.nsw.gov.au

1. Note down the catalogue number of the publication/s that you want
2. Call the publications hotline on 1300 799 003 and tell the operator the catalogue numbers of the products you would like to order, together with your address and credit card details for multiple copy purchases.

For customers who do not have access to the Internet or need further information to work out which publications they need, assistance is available from the WorkCover Assistance Service on 13 10 50.

WorkCover NSW will continue to improve the new service with the addition of more comprehensive search facilities and publication descriptions on our catalogue, an online ordering system and a complete pdf library of all WorkCover documents for free download from our website.

WHAT'S NEW ON OUR WEBSITE

WorkCover Laboratory Services Unit

The WorkCover Laboratory Services Unit is a specialised occupational health analytical service focusing on the presence of hazardous substances in the workplace. Tests are performed on biological (blood or urine) and workplace (air, dust, vapour, solid or liquid) samples as part of worker and workplace assessments.

The Laboratory uses state-of-the-art, modern instrumental techniques and the specialist staff have NATA signatory status.

Full details on the workplace tests and biological monitoring undertaken by the Laboratory are available on our website. Useful links, a list of abbreviations used in testing, staff profiles and even a newsletter can also be found at this area of the site: <http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/testing/thornleigh/thornleigh.asp>

Licensing and Notification

Licensing and Notification is a new section within the OHS area of our website, just the first step towards making it easier for you to communicate with us. Within this area you will find guidelines to assist you when advising us of licensing or notification information, plus the appropriate forms to be filled in. We will be adding to this area over time.

At present, there are two sets of Guidelines and Forms available:

Work involving use of Carcinogenic Substances

Any work that involves the use of listed carcinogens has special requirements under the *Occupational Health & Safety Regulation 2001*. WorkCover NSW no longer issues a permit for the purchase and use of carcinogens, this has been replaced by a notification system.

An employer (including self-employed people) intending to work with a listed carcinogen must notify WorkCover NSW, using the approved form, at least 60 days before commencing the proposed work.

The *Work Involving Use of Carcinogenic Substances Guidelines* provide the requirements for the notification (Clause 345(2)(d)) of listed carcinogenic substances (apart from asbestos removal) and must be followed in order for an application to be processed.

To download the *Work Involving Use of Carcinogenic Substances Guidelines - Notification Form*, visit: http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/html/licen_notif.asp

Lead Risk Work

The use of lead has special requirements under the *Occupational Health & Safety Regulation 2001*. People intending to carry out lead risk work must notify WorkCover before commencing work and establish health surveillance (including blood tests) for employees as required by the *OHS Regulation*.

These *Lead Risk Work Guidelines* have been developed for employers who must notify WorkCover NSW of lead risk work involving lead or substances containing lead (e.g. lead compounds) when this is classified as lead risk work.

They provide the requirements for notification of lead risk work and must be followed when notifying WorkCover of lead risk work. For full details of legal requirements, refer to the *OHS Regulation*.

To download the *Lead Risk Work Guidelines - Notification Form*, visit: http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/html/licen_notif.asp

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