



Head Office

Address: Level 1

19-21 Argyle Place South

Carlton, Victoria, 3053

Tel: (03) 9349 4655

Fax: (03) 9349 3955

Email: elenad@workstreams.com.au

Worker plunges eight meters

A worker who fell at least eight meters into the hold of a container ship has been taken to hospital in Melbourne with head and spinal injuries.

The 55-year-old man plunged from a platform in between some containers on board the ANL Explorer, moored in West Melbourne, last Friday, police said.

Rescue crews from Melbourne Fire Brigade (MFB) were scrambled to help the ship's crew members recover the injured man, who was eventually lifted out on a spinal board by a crane. He was treated at the scene by ambulance paramedics and taken to The Alfred Hospital with head and spinal injuries, Senior Constable David Fitzgerald said.

Health and safety authorities are investigating the incident.

Seven workers injured in chemical spill.

Seven workers suffered chemical burns and about 160 workers were evacuated following a chemical spill at a Melbourne factory today.

About 1,000 litres of the highly corrosive and flammable chemical N-butylamine (N-butylamine) leaked at Bostik Chemicals in High Street, Thomastown, about 12.45pm (AEST) today, a Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) spokesman said.

The leak was contained to a safe area within the factory but six workers were taken to hospital with chemical burns, while a seventh was treated by ambulance crews at the scene. A further 160 workers were evacuated.

A chemical absorbent was used to cover the spill, which will be cleared up by a specialist company overseen by MFB crews.

The cause of the spill is being investigated by WorkCover.

US study reveals overweight workers suffer injuries

Workplace safety officers could soon be telling you to go easy on the cakes.

New research in the American Journal of Epidemiology has shown that having a body mass index (BMI) in the overweight or obese range increases the risk of being injured at work. A normal BMI falls between 18 and 24.9, with a value of 25 to 29.9 indicating overweight and 30 or more classified as obese.

Researchers examined the injury reports of 7,690 workers from eight aluminium factories across the US. Between January 2002 and December 2004, 29 per cent were injured at least once. Approximately 85 per cent of the injured workers were classified as overweight or obese.

Twenty-eight per cent of injuries occurred among employees classified as overweight, and 64 per cent of injuries were sustained by obese workers.

Those in the highest obesity group (BMI greater than 40) were more than twice as likely to be injured on the job as those of normal weight.



WORKSTREAMS NEWS

June 2007

Inside this issue...

Stress injuries continue to rise	1
Company Directors Fined \$255,700	2,3
Seven workers injured in chemical spill	4
Worker plunges eight meters	4
US study reveals overweight workers suffer injuries	4

Stress injuries continue to rise.

Unless you have been stuck in a crevasse in Antarctica for the last five years, you will know that the incidence of stress claims continues to preoccupy employers and WorkCover agents alike. Once the domain of school teachers and police officers, stress injuries are now striking at every level of our industrial society. Blue collar workers, factory hands, disgruntled supervisors, over-challenged managers are reporting feeling those unmistakable stress symptoms: anxiety, depression, insomnia, sweaty palms, palpitations, anger and mood disorders. But Australia is not alone.

A psychological survey released on Monday 25th July in the US, by Chicago-based EAP provider ComPsych shows that 60 percent of employees report high levels of stress, with extreme fatigue, or feelings of being out of control. That is a five-point increase from the survey's results from the second half of 2006. Thirty three percent of employees said they have constant but manageable stress. Only 7 percent said their stress levels were low. Managers, on the other hand, said only 45 percent of employees were suffering from high stress levels. They believed 42 percent had constant but manageable stress levels.

And they said 13 percent of employees worked with low stress levels in their lives. "The results of this study suggest managers may be kidding themselves in terms of their workers' stress levels," Dr. Richard Chaifetz, chairman and CEO of ComPsych, said in a statement. Employee stress isn't always that easy to spot in the workplace, he said. "Rather, it often manifests itself in increased absences and reduced productivity."

Managers should let employees know about support services, including EAPs, that might be available to them, Chaifetz said. ACH, through its affiliated company WorkStreams provide Employee Assistance Programs at very competitive rates.

For information please call Elena on 93494655

Lets' all learn from this: Company Directors fined \$255,700.

The recent decision of the NSW Industrial Court clearly demonstrates the need to review safety policies, implement these and train all personnel in every facet of the job. There is a strong need to "internalize" this concept and for this you are invited to read this whole article.

A 16-year-old youth named Joel Exner on his third day at work got killed.

His employer and two company directors with responsibilities for safety at the construction site where he died have been convicted. The Industrial Court of New South Wales has imposed fines totaling \$255,700.

The accident occurred on 15 October 2003, five employees of JB Metal Roofing Pty Ltd (JBMR) were laying metal roofing sheets on a building at a construction site at Eastern Creek. After two workers had unwrapped a pack of roofing sheets, a third, Joel, while crouching down on a metal purlin, reached out to retrieve the plastic wrapping that had come away, but he lost his balance and fell. He fell through the erected safety mesh and landed on the compacted earth floor about 11.25 m below. He suffered extensive injuries and died in hospital the same evening. JBMR, as the employer, was prosecuted for breach of s 8(1) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 (NSW). The company had been contracted to provide labour to Garry Denson Metal Roofs Pty Ltd (GDMR). After the incident, GDMR was placed into voluntary administration and subsequently went into liquidation. However, its sole director, Gary Denson, who had acted as a general supervisor for the work performed by the JBMR employees, was deemed to be in breach of s 8(2) and was prosecuted according to s 26(1) of the Act. His son, James Denson, was officially the director of JBMR and, although he had not been involved in the work at the site, was also prosecuted according to s 26(1) of the Act.

The three defendants pleaded guilty. The charges involved failure to provide a safe system of work for the installation of metal roofing, including failure to ensure that: the safety mesh was adequately secured, workers were adequately trained and instructed in the installation of safety mesh, workers were adequately trained in walking along metal roof purlins while performing roofing work, workers wore footwear suitable for roofing work.

In court

The evidence given in the Industrial Court of New South Wales showed that the young worker who died had not been wearing a safety harness because he had not been working close to the edge of the roof. The safety mesh had been the only form of fall prevention provided. Both soles of his Globe sneakers had been worn and his shoelaces had been untied. He had not been issued with Volley sandshoes for the roof work, as the job safety analysis had required. He had received induction training for about an hour and 15 minutes on 13 October 2003 - his first day at work - but had not received any training in walking on the metal roof purlins. He had merely been told not to do any work he did not feel comfortable with and not to go near the edge of the roof.

The incident investigation had established that the safety mesh had not been installed according to Standards Australia's standard AS/NZS 4389 or the NSW Code of Practice - Safe Work on Roofs, Part 1. The workers who installed it had not been trained according to the code, and no inspection had been carried out before the roof work commenced to ensure the mesh had been correctly installed. The young worker had fallen on the mesh at a point where two lengths had been incorrectly joined.

He had received induction training for about an hour and 15 minutes on 13 October 2003 - his first day at work - but had not received any training in walking on the metal roof purlins.

Garry Denson, who had finalised the job safety analysis for the work to be performed, told the court he was unaware of the code of practice and other documents describing safe work methods for installing safety mesh. The court did not accept that this in any way could exculpate him. If he really had not been familiar with such documents in advance, he could and should at least have consulted the labels attached to the wire mesh rolls. They had referred to instructions for installation as set out under AS/NZS 4389 and stated, "Before installation check with local code of practice for safe work on roofs".

Telling the young worker not to perform work that he was uncomfortable with had been totally inadequate from a training point of view. Because of his youth and inexperience, he would have been at an obvious disadvantage in identifying situations where he might be at risk.

Equally, as a new employee, he would have had no way of knowing whether the shoes he was wearing were appropriate or not. The court found that the collective failings of all three defendants had made it entirely foreseeable that the workers on site would be placed at considerable risk to their safety.

Garry Denson had established JBMR in 2002 in order to allow his son James, then 21 years old, to become acquainted with the business of metal roofing. At the time, the latter had recently completed his apprenticeship but had no experience in the management of employees or in many matters relating to the installation of metal roofing. Before the accident, James Denson had not attended the Eastern Creek site at all but worked elsewhere and left the management of the JBMR employees to his father.

Immediately after the accident, both James and Garry Denson had reviewed all work processes from the point of view of safety, acquired the code of practice for roof work and instructed all employees in the correct procedures for installing safety mesh. James Denson had also undertaken OHS training, redrafted JBMR's safe work method statements and rectified safety mesh that the company had installed at other sites. The court said these steps could easily have been taken before the incident on 15 October 2003 and found that the offences fell in the high range of objective seriousness.

The defendants were convicted. JB Metal Roofing Pty Ltd was fined \$200,000, Garry Denson \$35,700 and James Denson \$20,000.