CHANGING WORK INJURY TRENDS

STRATEGIC SAFETY PLANNING WORKSHOP 16TH NOVEMBER

SAFETY LEADERSHIP 2-DAY COURSE 29TH & 30TH NOVEMBER

BREAKFAST ON THE ROOF 6TH DECEMBER
What’s new for October?


This month we examine the changes in injury trends over recent decades, and the impact this has on managers and supervisors.

Our next safety leadership course is coming up fast (29 & 30 November), and our very popular Safety Breakfast Briefing is on 6th December. Book now!

Finally, we look at the top six strategic planning mistakes, golden safety rules, and a correction to the Draft Vic. Regulations.

Remember - October is National Safety Month.

Stay Safe!

80,000 in Benchmarking Survey

Firstly, a big thank you to all those who provided data for our annual safety performance benchmarking survey. The Survey was extended into September to accommodate some requests from good friends for a late submission.

We had a wide variety of businesses and organisations participate representing about 80,000 workers throughout Australia and New Zealand.

A couple of interesting trends were noted this year included a reduction in safety staff per 100 employees and a drop in workers compensation costs.

Participants will shortly receive a free copy of the full report with analysis and added commentary to help understand where their organisation sits in regard to safety performance.

If you would like a copy of the report, forward your data and we will update the benchmarking report with your information and revised benchmarks.
Changing Work Injury Trends

In the early 1950s workers compensation claims had a preponderance of incident-based physical injuries including cuts and bruises from interface with machinery, and slip and fall impact injuries.

By the 1960s the mix of injuries changed to include a large percentage of over-exertion claims, and by the 1970s some studies showed back injuries accounted for about 30 percent of all claims. This situation raises the question:

Why have sprain injuries become so prevalent?

Sprain injuries have grown not because we lift more things today, as we have more lifting aids, robots and bulk handling than any earlier period.

Soft tissue injuries, primarily of the wrist and shoulder became more prevalent in the 1980s, when the term repetitive strain injury (RSI) was invented. Some people called RSI “Kangaroo Paw” because Australia apparently had one of the highest reported incidence rates of this type of injury in the world. Psychological and stress-related illness was almost non-existent at this time.

By the mid-1980s stress claims had grown in workers compensation numbers and cost in many jurisdictions.

Today stress and psychological injuries are some of the most expensive claims, and increasingly arising in conjunction with minor physical injuries. For example, a minor hand injury allegedly causing depression or low self-esteem and inability to work are sometimes being accepted as valid claims where the circumstances satisfy the compensation rules.

Objective injuries

Objective injuries are generally self-evident, with visible trauma, and are relatively easy for doctors to diagnose and to forecast an accurate prognosis. For example, a broken arm will take X weeks before the plaster is removed and Y weeks to resume full normal activities, a well-known and accepted prognosis by medical specialists.
Subjective injuries

A subjective injury is in essence where the doctor has to rely on what the patient tells them in order to make a diagnosis e.g. I feel stressed when… This is not to say the person’s illness and disability are not real, but they are difficult to accurately diagnose and verify.

The likelihood of an individual to suffer a subjective injury is often more affected by their personal situation and relationships at work and home, than the workplace circumstances. However, to access workers compensation the deficiencies in the workplace and any “unpleasant” interactions that could contribute to stress or a psychological condition are invariably cited in claims.

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<th>Summary of injury claim trends</th>
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Even more challenging for doctors, and the workers compensation system, is that it is impossible for doctors to provide an accurate prognosis.

For example, a person may suffer a psychological condition for the rest of their life, or make a miraculous recovery next month, and the medical profession currently has no accurate means of determining their future condition with any certainty.

The work injury trend summarised above then begs the question:

*Are our workplaces and tasks changing significantly, or are other factors influencing the claim trends?*
Dan Petersen suggests* the ease of access to claims and “generosity” of the workers compensation system (e.g. no waiting period and little or no drop in pay) directly correlates to increasing claim numbers and costs. * Safety Management A Human Approach by Dan Petersen, ASSE, 2001.

Workers compensation is part of the social welfare system and the ‘Social Licence’ to conduct business in Australia

Workers compensation is in reality part of Australia’s social welfare system, because the community would be burdened with more people drawing on government benefits if the businesses that cause or contribute to work-related incapacity did not pay for it. If this is true are Australian employers paying too much or now being increasingly asked to pay for cases where the work contribution to injury is marginal or non-existent?

There is no perfect answer to the question above, as it is partially cultural whether a community wishes to have a generous social welfare system, or a lean “capitalist” style system with strong incentives to return to work, even if individuals are expected to carry some soreness or experience some personal difficulties or inconvenience.

The purpose of this article is not to criticise the current system, but to help you better understand why such systems exist and how they operate.

Good safety leaders are more confident and comfortable with the often personal and psychological issues that often overlap with work injuries and illness.

We recommend all frontline managers and supervisors receive appropriate safety leadership training to help them cope with these type of issues in the workplace.

October is Safety Month

National Safe Work Month aims to improve awareness of work health and safety in Australia.

To get involved, see Safe Work Australia website with links to your state websites.
safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/media-events/safety-month
Safety Leadership 2-Day Course

The last two-day public safety leadership course for 2016 is being run next month.

Dates: Tuesday 29th and Wednesday 30th November 2016.

Venue: Safety Action Boardroom  
Fee: $1,500 + GST

A comprehensive manual is provided to participants, and tea and coffee provided all day, along with a light lunch and morning and afternoon snacks to ensure you are kept fully fuelled, so you can absorb and master the many unique and invaluable leadership tips contained in the training.

If you would like to be a better safety leader call us to book a place or for a brochure.

Breakfast on the Roof (Free)

Your Safety Story for 2016

Our last “Breakfast on the Roof” networking session for 2016 is scheduled for Tuesday 6th December. 7.30am registration & coffee for 8am start. Session finishes at 9am.

Save this date now, and let us know so we can cater for everyone.

As usual, we will have a barista for real coffee to get you going so early in the morning, and some light snacks for breakfast.

This is an opportunity to join us for some fun and interesting safety stories from 2016.

Everyone is invited to share:

a) A good safety initiative, or
b) Something you would not recommend to others, or
c) The most important lesson you learned this year.
Top 6 Strategic Safety Mistakes

Do you prepare annual safety plans with key activities and timing, as budgeted for? This is NOT a strategic safety plan, but many call it so.

If you want to know the top six mistakes that most safety managers make each year when making plans for the future then come along to this provocative and informative workshop.

**STRATEGIC SAFETY PLANNING WORKSHOP**

Our annual workshop for strategic safety planners is scheduled for:

- **Date:** Wednesday 16 November 2016.
- **Venue:** Safety Action Boardroom
- **Book Now** as places are limited for this popular session, or call for a course outline.

Golden Safety Rules

Do you have a set of “Golden Safety Rules” for your organisation?

Some refer to these as “Non-Negotiable Rules” or “Cardinal Safety Rules”. It doesn’t matter what you call them as long as everyone understands why you have them and what they are.

Life in business is so complex these days that it is not possible for anybody to read all the safety procedures and instructions in larger organisations, and if they have they can’t remember them all. Therefore having a succinct set of Golden Safety Rules as relevant to your organisation is becoming increasingly important.

Some sample high-level general rules could include:

1. Only perform work you are trained and authorised for.
2. Never operate unsafe or faulty equipment, escalate to your supervisor immediately.
3. Do not present to work if unable to work safely *e.g. suffering excessive fatigue, illness, or affected by drugs or alcohol.*

A couple of task specific golden rules could include things like:

1. Do not work under a suspended load, or move a load over anyone.
2. Do not ride on any vehicle or mobile plant or trailer, unless in a proper seat with the seat belt on.

Each organisation should identify the key rules most relevant for them and which is essential for safe operation. **We include this topic in our 2-day Safety Leadership Course.**
Draft Vic Regulations Correction

Last month we summarised the proposed changes to the Victorian OHS Regulations.

In part we mentioned that reach stackers will require a licence, which is correct – but we incorrectly showed an image of a pedestrian operated reach forklift which does not require a licence.

Our friends from WorkSafe Victoria were quick to let us know of this error, and pointed out the licence requirement for reach stackers mentioned is for Container Reach Stackers.

Many thanks to Richard Versteegen at WorkSafe Victoria for this important clarification.

The link below is to a 2009 WorkSafe Victoria Guidance Note on Container reach stackers


The transition period to GHS for chemical classification and labelling is almost over.

Our next GHS training is:

Melbourne,
Tuesday 8th November 2016,
8am – 10am.

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN
See us at the NSC Congress in Anaheim

Later this month, Andrea, Katie and Stephen will be heading to Anaheim, California for the National Safety Council (NSC) Congress and Expo. The NSC Congress and Expo is the world's largest annual safety event.

Andrea will be presenting at the congress with Chris Tripoli of GlaxoSmithKline on “Zero Access,” a Zero Harm Program for machinery safeguarding.

See congress.nsc.org for more information about the congress.

Andrea, Katie and Stephen will also complete two Disney Institute training courses while in California.

Note: Gary, Zara and Kirill will be available for any enquiries at the office while the rest of the team are away.

The Safety Action Team

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