

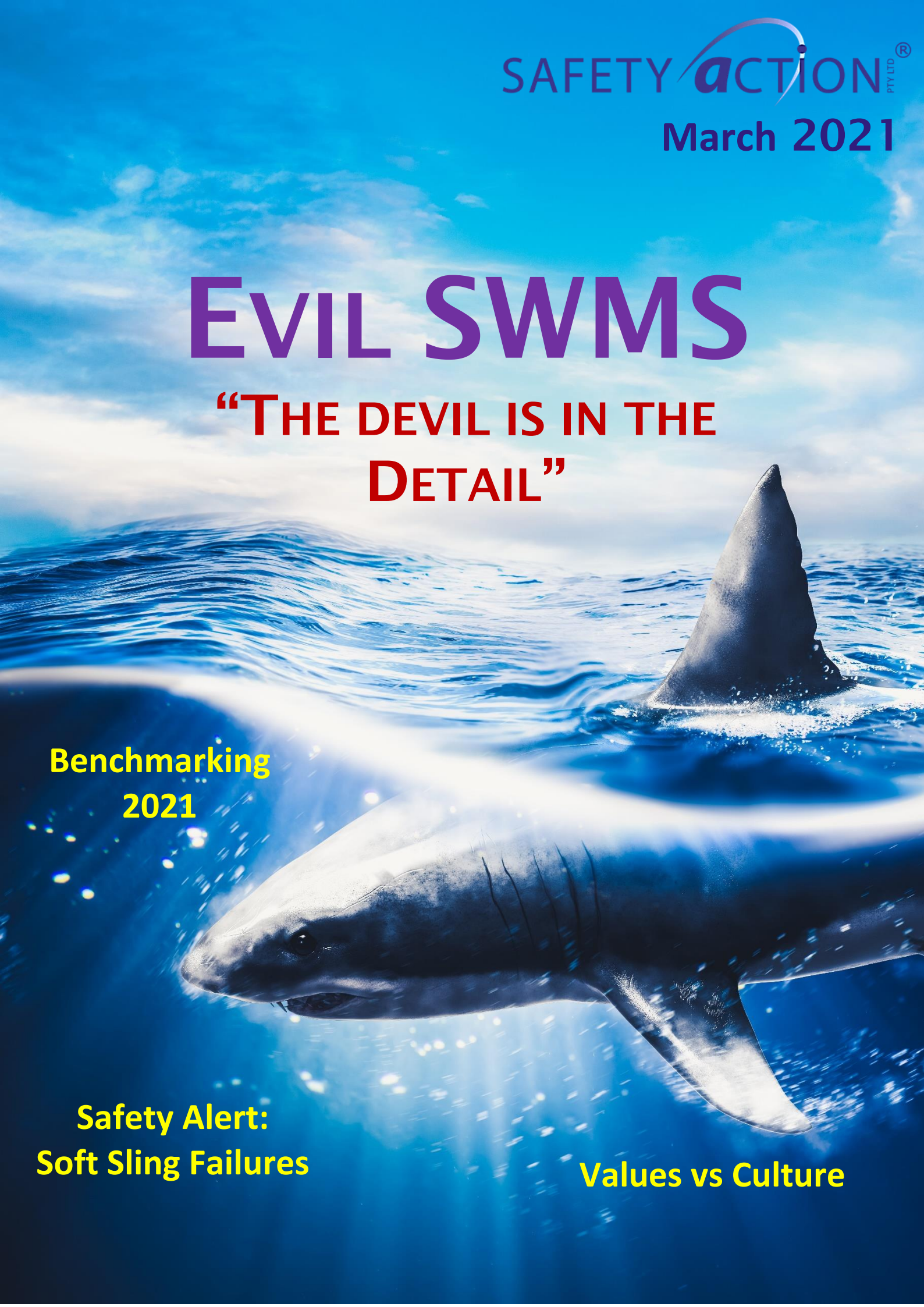
EVIL SWIMS

**“THE DEVIL IS IN THE
DETAIL”**

**Benchmarking
2021**

**Safety Alert:
Soft Sling Failures**

Values vs Culture



What's New in March

Welcome to the March Safety News.

Have you ever wondered how to provide a clear and succinct SWMS? Lets start by looking at what not to do in our main article "Evil SWMS".

We also share a recent WorkSafe Victoria safety alert regarding soft sling failures and explain the difference between Values and Culture in the workplace.

Our Safety performance benchmarking survey is running again this year. More information on page 5.



Stephen

Stay Safe!

Safety Webinar – 9 March 10am

We invite you to join us at **10am on Tuesday 9 March** for our free monthly webinar to keep you up to date on workplace health and safety. Gary and the team present short informal sessions of only 20 to 30 minutes on topical issues and answer your questions.

[Register here](#)

Missed our last webinar? View them [here](#)

SAFETY ACTION TEAM



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Evil SWMS

“The Devil is in too much detail”

If you wanted to alert workers to a serious risk would you provide them with clear unambiguous warning and succinct guidance on the safe procedure, or would you hide important precautions among lots of routine administrative information?

Unfortunately, we find during our audits that most safe work method statements (SWMS) are tedious, excessively long, with convoluted structure and quite simply ***not fit for purpose***.

As best we can tell these SWMS have been prepared by well-meaning enthusiastic, although sometimes fanatical, people who try to put everything they know about safety into every SWMS.

This situation caused me to think, if the Devil was to prepare a SWMS what would it look like?

What would a Devil SWMS look like?

Tragically, we have concluded the Devil would do exactly the same as most safety officers are still doing all around industry today.

Devil’s SWMS

So, what would the Devil do?

- Do not highlight critical risks but swamp them with every trivial hazard you can think up.
- Make the document so long it would not be practical to have a copy or read it in the field or on the job eg designed only for desktop audit.
- Fill the first few pages with mundane administrative information, so they think the whole document is irrelevant to their work.
- Use dull and repetitive language throughout to ensure the reader quickly loses interest.
- Hide important instructions and safety precautions in amongst lots of boring and unimportant information.
- Don’t audit compliance with the SWMS eg only prepared to pass audits.
- Don’t use numbering or bold headings for key points, so they are harder to find.

The “Weight Test”

Many people feel uncomfortable if their SWMS is succinct because they fear others will think it is defective or insufficient for the circumstances. So, they add more stuff which results in SWMS that are commonly 10, or even 15 pages long.

SWMS are for Workers, not Auditors

The safety regulations never intended SWMS be expanded to satisfy all the peculiar requirements of certification auditors, or senior managers trying to impress how clever they are with sophisticated documents and procedures.

The real audience for SWMS are the workers doing the job

We should start by focusing on what the workplace safety regulations intended SWMS to achieve.

Focus SWMS on Hazards & Controls

The regulations prescribe what is to be included in a SWMS, per below:

1. Identify high-risk construction work; and
2. **Hazards** (associated with the task); and
3. **Controls** eg Precautions to control the identified hazards.
Plus, for WA list equipment to be used and qualifications for equipment/task.

Anything else put into a SWMS merely acts to dilute warnings about hazards, or disguise important precautions that need to be taken.

Remember, an imperfect safety procedure that is easy to understand and is followed all the time is more effective than the "perfect" lengthy procedure, which is often not understood or simply ignored.

Recipe for an Effective SWMS

There are four (4) simple stages to preparing an effective SWMS eg:

- 1) Break the task down into its basic steps;
- 2) List the key hazards associated with each step of the task;
- 3) Determine controls necessary at each step;
- 4) List equipment to be used and qualifications for task (WA Reg. requirement)

One Page SWMS

As a rule of thumb, SWMS should be no more than one page double-sided.

If your SWMS is more than one page double-sided, split the task into stages eg set-up machine, start and run machine, clear blockages or faults, shut down machine.

If you would like to learn how to prepare effective SWMS book into one of our safety leadership courses (public or in-house) or half day workshop. For dates or a quote contact Safety Action on 03 8544 4300 or [email](mailto:info@safetyaction.com.au).

Alert: Soft Sling Failures Due to Incorrect Use



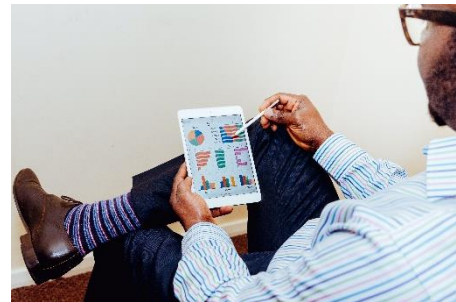
A number of soft sling failures in workplaces have occurred recently resulting in life threatening injuries.

WorkSafe Victoria has issued an alert to highlight the dangers of the incorrect use of soft slings when lifting loads. For more information click [here](#).

Benchmarking Safety Survey 2021

We are running our safety performance benchmarking survey again this year in July, after missing it last year.

The data we would like to collect will be detailed next month but will be similar to previous surveys and easy to obtain.



This year we want all participants to help us encourage your friends and colleagues in other businesses to participate, as the more participants we have the more accurate the benchmark standards will be.

Start getting your safety data together so you will be ready.

Joke of the Month

Caution: Stereotype dysfunctional couple joke.

My Wife isn't talking to me.
She said I ruined her birthday.
I'm not sure how.
I didn't even know it was her birthday.



Values vs Culture

Many executives say they want a strong safety culture in their organisation. I believe most of them are genuine in their desire and efforts. So why do many fail?

We have commented before that most people do not understand what a safety culture actually is, let alone how best to create it.

Culture is an Output

Culture is the output of our efforts, not an input that we can simply buy or commission. Every business, including charities and not-for-profits (NFPs), strive hard every year to generate more income eg make a profit or surplus. Profit or loss is an output of the business's activities, and are the result of the business purpose, resourcing, systems, training, behaviours and values.

You cannot buy a culture, but you can influence its development and direction by guiding your people to stick to your organisational purpose, agreed behaviours and values.

Values Guide Our Decisions

Values guide our decision making eg ***we always act honestly and in the best interest of our customers / stakeholders and comply with the law.*** If these are our values, then all decisions will be guided with these elements as a foundation.

By contrast, the recent Financial Services (Banking) Royal Commission found many managers in the major banks valued personal reward and bonuses above all else, which clearly steered them away from the interests of the organisation they worked for and the community that the banking industry is meant to serve.

Values are deeply ingrained in individuals and in turn imbedded in the company culture over a long period of time. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude large numbers of staff in the major banks had these "selfish" values for a long period of time, and the Board could have detected it if they had looked eg culture audit.

Clear Values Allows Flexibility

Unlike rules and procedures, which may become unsuitable for the circumstances as the organisation expands or evolves, values are more enduring and can scale up as the business grows.

Poor Values Damage Culture

If the values of your staff deteriorate over time eg through staff turnover or acquisitions or mergers with businesses with different values, the safety culture can also deteriorate. Therefore, you need to survey your safety culture periodically and adjust your safety culture plan accordingly.

See also article by CEO of Xero in Aust. Inst. Company Directors (AICD) magazine June 2020

Interested in a safety culture audit, training for your safety leaders, or a plan to build a strong safety culture in your business?

[Email](#) or call us on 03 8544 4300 for a quote.