

ARE CONTRACTORS REALLY THE PROBLEM?

- How High Can We Stack IBC's?
- New Asbestos Register
- Replacing Gas
- Toxic Workplace Culture Conviction
- Are The Block's Benchtop's Unsafe?



What's new in November?

Our key topics this month include:

- How High Can We Stack IBCs?
- New Asbestos Register
- November is Asbestos Awareness Month
- Are Contractors Really the Problem?
- Replacing Gas Heating and Cooking



We farewell Vivek Ravi who has moved on to other ventures. He was a valuable part of our team and we wish him all the very best for the future.

Stay Safe!

Safety Webinar – 10th November 2023

We invite you to join us at **10am on Friday 10th November** 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



Gary Rowe



Andrea Rowe



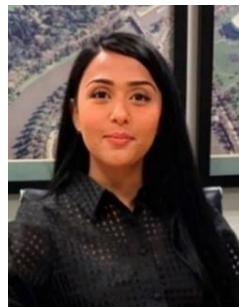
Stephen Weber



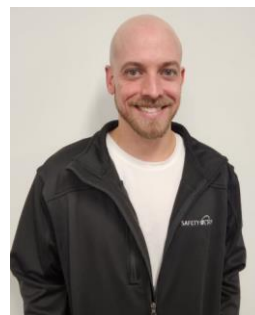
Katie Weber



Sarah Oliver



Sue'Ellen Bennett



Nick Bennett



Theodore

Are Contractors Really the Problem?

Contractors are often seen as a problem to be managed, but in reality the inherent risks are owned and created by the occupier's business and processes.

Contractors are often seen as a problem to be managed

Below are some important points worth considering when next engaging with your contractors.

1. Contractors are Vulnerable

Contractors are more likely to be injured, as they often undertake difficult or higher risk tasks, and often in circumstances which are less than ideal.



We need to look at ourselves first and check the reasonableness of what we want contractors to do, against how our own employees would do it.

Spend a bit more time to ensure contractors understand your safety standards and desired approach to the job.

2. Squeezed on Price

Your policy might say *“we care about everyone”*, but in reality contractors are engaged on price and effectiveness. Every procurement team is constantly pressed on achieving more products and services for less cost.

Conduct your own preliminary estimate of time and cost to complete the desired task. If price inordinately lower, make enquiries about proposed contractor resourcing, practices and equipment for the project.

3. Low Levels of Inclusion or Participation

Despite safety laws requiring workplace consultation to include contractors, they are often poorly briefed on site risks and precautions and largely ignored as long as they complete their job on time without fuss.

Communicate with your contractors – Don't talk at them

Empower contractors to raise concerns and make suggestions for improvements. Indeed, we need to “reward” them in some way for bringing issues to our attention.

4. Low Level of Authority

Contractors typically have a low level of control or authority to respond to difficulties that may arise when working on your site.

This can result in contractors working in sub-standard conditions or circumstances, that our employees would refuse to accept if they were doing the same job.

Empower contractors to stop work and escalate safety concerns, just as you do for your own staff.

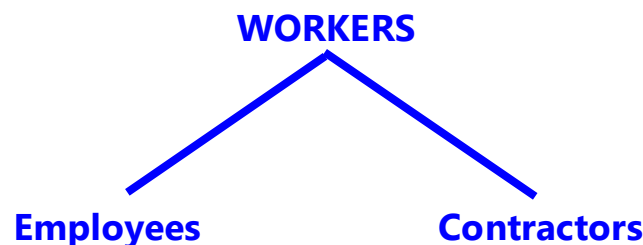
5. Culture Unknown

Despite thorough contractor pre-qualification, corporate briefings and provision of company policies and procedures, contractors often don't properly understand the risk appetite or safety culture of your business, and may consequently make decisions or take actions that would be widely understood by your employees as unacceptable. This level of detail is rarely included in site safety inductions.

Allow more time to properly brief and familiarise new contractors with your business culture and safety expectations.

6. Need to Protect Contractors

We need to protect contractors better from the risks our business has created, such as poor access to plant and machinery for service or inspection, or inadequate equipment for lifting, raising or moving heavy or awkward items.



(only the contract document is different)

7. Elevate Contractors to Partners

We need to treat our contractors more as equal partners who bring valuable skills, knowledge and experience to our business, and often do the jobs we are not willing or able to do.

Acknowledgement: Adapted by Gary Rowe from presentation by Sue Bottrell at Linksafe function 21 Sep. 2023.

Safety Action can assist with a variety of services including; audits of Principal Contractors (PCs), work site inspections, pre-qualification of contractor firms, monitoring worker credentials, and online contractor management systems.

How High Can We Stack IBC's?

Increasingly, businesses with large volumes of chemicals are using intermediate bulk containers, typically referred to as IBCs.



Typical 1,000L capacity IBC

IBCs provide a handy and cost effective method for storage and transport of liquid chemicals. However, many auditors and storage personnel are not sure of the height limits for stacking IBCs.

Australian Standard AS 1940 typically referred to as the "Flammable Liquids Code" states in clause 4.7 that: *"IBCs containing flammable liquids should be limited to two (2) high, unless in purpose built racking and not connected to any piping or delivery system"*.



IBC storage 2-high in a racking system

The main constraint on the storage height of non-hazardous goods is the structural strength of the IBC metal frame and stability of the high stacks. Therefore, we recommend the following rules be followed for full IBC storage.

1. General Goods

Height of full IBC stacks **limited to IBC manufacturer recommendations**.

In the absence of manufacturer's advice, we suggest you limit full IBC stacks to about 4 to 6-high, assuming the IBCs are in good condition and the stack is stable and not leaning.

Note: IBCs can be stored in pallet racking systems to maximum height and maximum design weight limit of the racking system.

2. Flammable Liquids

Stacks of flammable liquids in IBCs to be limited to two-high, clause 4.7 of AS 1940 clause 4.7.

3. Other Hazardous Chemicals

We recommend storage of other hazardous chemicals in full IBCs also be limited to 2-high, unless an authoritative risk assessment confirms it is safe to stack full IBCs higher, and there are no regulation restrictions for the specific hazardous chemicals involved.



Example of IBCs stacked in a warehouse



Empty IBC storage outdoors

Storage of Empty IBCs

Empty IBC containers can typically be stacked higher, as the total load and stress on the IBC metal frame which supports the IBCs is lower, and the risk of leaking chemicals falling on people below is eliminated or minimised.

Therefore, empty IBC stacks can be determined per local risk assessment, or IBC manufacturer recommendations, as long as the IBCs are in good condition, the stack is stable and not leaning, and no other risks are posed to personnel or property.

Are The Block's Benchtop's Unsafe?

The Victorian Trade Hall Council (VTHC) have disputed claims by the reality tv show "The Block" that engineered stone benchtops are safe, 'just like beach sand.'



The Australian Engineered Stone Advisory Group (AESAG) shared a petition claiming a ban on engineered stone benchtops 'won't solve silicosis' and expresses concerns about a wholesale ban, which they claim is 'unnecessary' and 'excessive' and won't address the serious issue of silicosis as it overlooks silica exposure in construction.

The VTHC admits that silica exposure occurs in other industries, including in mining, tunnelling and quarries, but the massive increase in silicosis amongst predominantly young men can be traced back to exposure to the silica in engineered stone.

Aside from Silica, engineered stone has other hazards that are only beginning to be understood. New research indicates that engineered stone produces ultrafine particles along with volatile organic compounds, polyaromatic hydrocarbons, and metals when it is processed. These may contribute to the accelerated silicosis seen in engineered stone workers.

The VTHC concludes that the Elimination of the use of engineered stone is by far the safest way to proceed.

See the full article by VTHC [here](#).

Asbestos Register Guide

Safe Work Australia has released a new asbestos register guide and template. The register is a workplace safety management tool that records the location, type, condition and date of identification of all asbestos and asbestos containing materials at your workplace.

Asbestos registers at the workplace
guidance now published



The new guide will help you understand:

- What an asbestos register is and when your workplace needs one, and
- How to develop and maintain a comprehensive asbestos register.

Visit [Safe Work Australia](#) for more information and the guide.

Asbestos Awareness Month



November is National Asbestos Awareness month. Asbestos diseases are continuing to increase among Australians as a direct result of exposure to asbestos fibres during home renovations or in the workplace. Education on how to manage asbestos safely in accordance with the regulations cannot be overstated.

To participate in National Asbestos Awareness month and to download your free resources [register here](#).

Toxic Workplace Culture Conviction

Court Services Victoria (CSV) has been convicted and fined \$379,157, plus costs, over a toxic workplace culture at the Coroners Court of Victoria. The culture contributed to the suicide of one worker and numerous others taking stress leave.

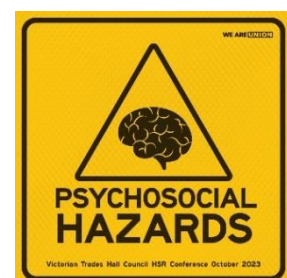


The court heard that from December 2015 until September 2018 workers at the Coroners Court were at risk from exposure to traumatic materials, high workloads and work demands, role conflict, poor workplace relationships and inappropriate workplace behaviours.

Numerous complaints by workers were made during this time and a number of workers took leave after reporting feelings of anxiety, PTSD, stress, fear, and humiliation.

CSV admitted it failed to conduct any adequate process to identify risks or a risk assessment of the risks to psychological health of employees at the coroners court. For the full article by WorkSafe Victoria see [here](#).

For an Assessment of the Safety Culture in your workplace call Safety Action on 03 8544 4300 or [email](#) for a Safety Climate Survey or a Psychosocial Hazards Assessment.



Replacing Gas Heating and Cooking

by Gary Rowe

If you are like me, you are concerned about government bans on gas heating and cooking for the future. Many people say they like the warm feeling of gas heating and wonder how you can cook a stir fry in an electric pan without the flames.



As we have seen, advocates for global warming action are pressing governments in each state and at federal level to eliminate use of fossil fuels.

So, I was clearly interested when I saw an authoritative article from RMIT recently which explained why some people feel cold with reverse-cycle air conditioning and are not happy with the change.

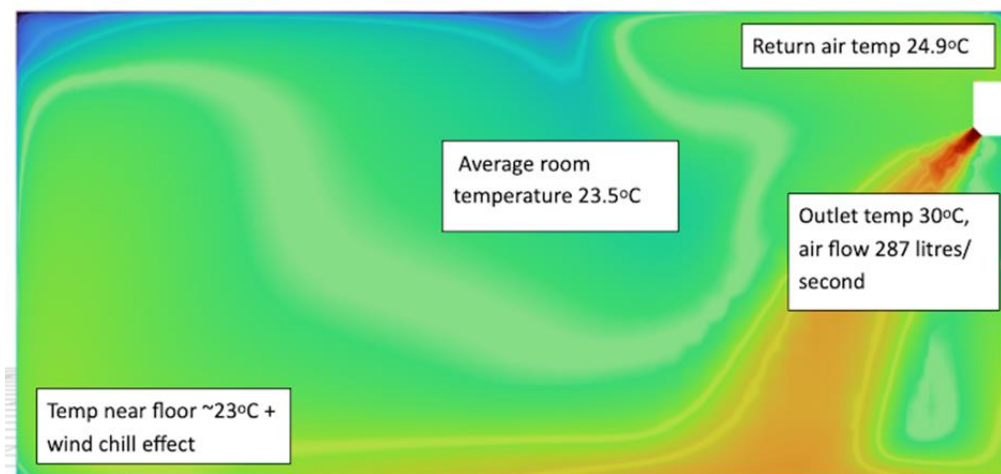
The team at RMIT have done computer modelling of air flows in the home to offer some answers and solutions to being comfortable with reverse-cycle heating.

Apparently, it has a lot to do with our poorly insulated homes with single-glazed windows in Australia, which result in low surface temperatures and heat losses and temperature losses are high.

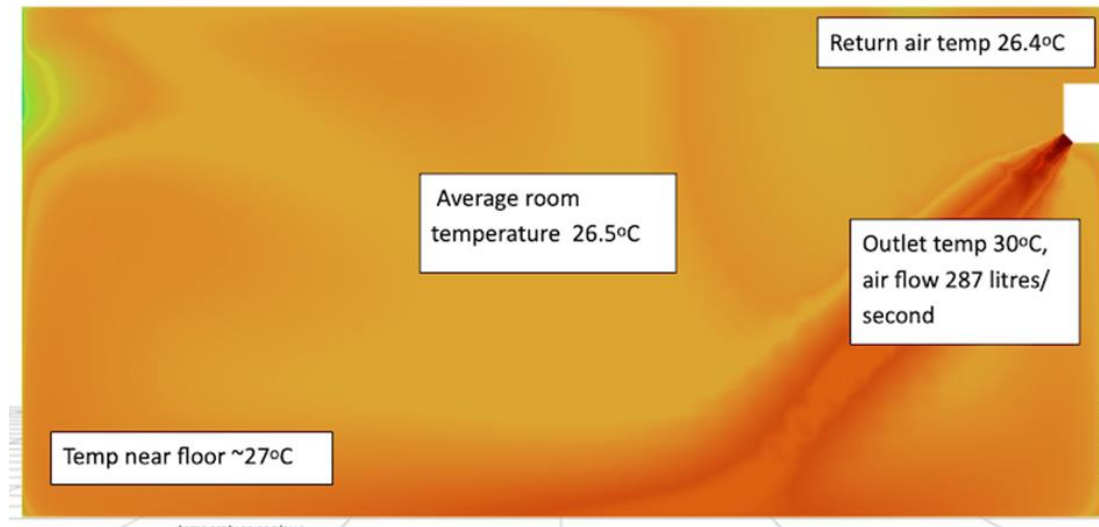
Also, our warm bodies radiate heat to the cold surfaces of the walls and windows. This means we tend to feel even colder when we are near the cold surfaces.

The RMIT study found a living room in a typical 1960s home has large areas of glazing on two sides, an internal end wall and a reverse-cycle air conditioner mounted high on the external end wall.

The diagram below shows the temperatures around a poorly insulated room, from the 30°C heater inlet to the 23°C temperature near the floor with a wind chill effect.



By contrast the diagram below shows the same room with same inlet heater temperature of 30°C and same air flow of 287 Litres/second, but with good home insulation and double glazing on the windows.



Not only is the room warmer but there is less difference in temperature in the various zones.

In short, to feel comfortable with reverse-cycle air conditioning we will need to better insulate our homes. RMIT researchers say this will also reduce our energy bills.

Acknowledgement: RMIT research team on reverse-cycle heating, published 2 October 2023.

Cooking Without Gas

From 1 January 2024 gas connections will be banned in Victoria for all new housing and sub-divisions. However, none of the research so far has fully answered the human desire for flame-cooked meals occasionally.

So far we have only seen suggestions to use; induction hot plates, microwave or toaster ovens, and using flat bottomed woks for stir frying.

We can only hope that new ideas will emerge that allow electric cooking to provide us with the flavours, smells and taste, to match our favourite flame cooked meals.



Important Dates



World Congress for Safety and Health Sydney November 2023

“Digital transformation and the Human Factor in Machine and System Safety: Opportunities and Risks”

Safety Action’s Andrea Rowe joins speakers from all over the world at this year’s World Congress for Safety and Health. Andrea will be discussing Robotics and Cobots.



The conference is on this month from the **27th – 30th November 2023** in Sydney, Australia.

For more information and to register click [here](#).



SOUTHERN SAFETY GROUP

DON'T LEARN ABOUT SAFETY BY ACCIDENT



Southern Safety Group (not for profit) exists to provide members with quality, relevant and practical advice on workplace OH&S issues.

Monthly Meetings at Springers Leisure Centre, Cheltenham Rd Keysborough, Vic.

Held on the last Monday of the month from 3pm to 5pm.

Providing monthly meetings to offer assistance and advice to members and to provide a forum for discussion of health and safety ideas, issues, problems and solutions.

More information and contact SSG [here](#).