

ETU OHS REPS NEWSLETTER



WORKING IN THE HEAT

Heat, whether 'seasonal' or part of the 'normal work environment', can be a hazard - working in heat can lead to workers suffering serious illness and can also lead to increased accidents.

Work related injuries and illnesses due to exposure to heat must be prevented primarily through elimination, modifying the workplace or systems of work. Where these measures do not adequately control the risk, it may be necessary to introduce administrative controls (for example introduction of a work-rest regime).

Don't wait until summer to raise the issue with management and begin the process of negotiating a heat agreement appropriate to your workplace. This should be done at an OHS Committee level, ensuring the input of all affected workers. The agreement should consider both seasonal and work-related heat. It should include at least the following:

- All new indoor work areas to be temperature-controlled, where practicable, by air-conditioning.
 - Where possible the workers' environment to be maintained in a range between 18° and 23° C.
 - Temperatures be kept in that range through the use of engineering controls such as:
 - ◆ Air conditioning, air circulating fans, provision of good ventilation;
 - ◆ Insulating or shielding sources of heat in the workplace;
 - ◆ Insulating the roofs and walls of the workplace;
 - ◆ reducing heat gain via windows by reflective film or blinds, and by reducing window area, and moving desks and workstations away from windows;
 - ◆ Ducting hot exhausts outside the workplace;
 - ◆ Mechanising some of the tasks; and
 - ◆ Providing air-conditioned work vehicles.
 - A general heat hazard audit carried out to identify and prioritise areas/processes of concern.
- For working in the heat:
 - ◆ Establishment of "cool" areas, including air-conditioned lunch rooms
 - ◆ Providing a choice of light protective clothing and hats
 - ◆ Use of air-circulating fans
 - ◆ Use of shade cloths
 - Administrative controls:
 - ◆ Sign posting heat stress areas
 - ◆ Changing the rate of work
 - ◆ Modifying the hours of work (in consultation with the union. Check your Enterprise Agreement,)
 - ◆ Providing lighter, alternative work
 - ◆ Rest breaks (see below)
 - ◆ Mechanising some of the work tasks (e.g. using power tools)
 - ◆ allowing staff to dress appropriately for hot weather
 - Personal Protective measures
 - Investigating any incidents of heat stress
 - Providing effective sunburn creams and skin protectors (SPF 30+)
 - Providing constant supplies of cool drinking water. Workers should drink 100-200ml of water at frequent intervals to replace fluid lost through perspiration.
- It is recommended that the duration of paid rest breaks within each hour when the temperature reaches and/or exceeds temperatures shown :
- 15 minutes at 30⁰ C
 - 30 minutes at 32⁰ C
 - 45 minutes at 34⁰ C
 - 60 minutes at 36⁰ C
- Ensure the policy is reviewed each year by the OHS Committee.

NEWS—WorkSafe 18 November 2009

The following article comes from WorkSafe. At this time of year its important to take extra care at work as our minds may be thinking ahead to the holiday season instead of the work we are doing now.

Think safe—be safe

Workplace death toll at highest level in eight years

Victoria’s work-related death toll is at the highest point for this time of the year since 2001.

It’s prompted WorkSafe to call on employers and workers to take a zero-tolerance approach to safety issues in the last six weeks of the year.

The death of a man near Mansfield last week took to 25 the number of Victorians who have died in traumatic circumstances at work this year.

There have been two deaths this month and seven since the start of October. That’s the same figure for the last three months of 2008.

WorkSafe’s Executive Director, John Merritt, said the last few weeks of the year put at risk people who needed to get work finished before holidays or who were building-up to the busiest time of year.

“Whether you’re in construction where jobs have to be finished before a lengthy summer shutdown or retailing, warehousing and road transport which are becoming increasingly busy, now is the time to ensure high safety standards are applied.”

WorkSafe is investigating last Wednesday’s fatality which involved a 48-year-old man who was delivering turf to a home near Lake Eildon.

He was on sloping ground using a three-wheeled forklift which can be carried on a truck when the machine tipped backwards and he was hit by the mast which swung back and hit him. He died at the scene.

On 6 November, a 42-year-old man fell from a roof and died while installing cables for a television antenna on a house in Tullamarine.

The self-employed technician was on the roof of a house when WorkSafe believes he fell 2.5 metres to the ground.

Meanwhile, another 42-year-old man is being treated for serious burns at the Alfred Hospital after fuel ignited as he prepared to refill a generator at Dandenong South on Monday.

Mr Merritt said the seven recent deaths and recent serious incidents were signs that employers and workers had to do more to make workplaces safer.

“Safety is principally the responsibility of employers and it’s WorkSafe’s job to enforce the law. We take that responsibility seriously and expect others to do the same.

“Unless a tougher-minded approach is taken to safety at the business level our death and injury toll will continue to spiral upwards at the cost of the entire community.”

2010 Calendar

EEIT OHS TRAINING DATES

10AM –12PM

Melbourne –

- 24th February
- 21st April
- 23rd June
- 25th August
- 20th October

Held at:

ETU Office
200 Arden Street
North Melbourne

OHS REP TRAINING

Contact Tanya—0393269377 to book into the courses below.

Initial 5 Day OHS REPS Course

- March 10, 11, 16, 17, 18
- July 7, 8, 13, 14, 15
- October 6, 7, 12, 13, 14

1 Day Refresher OHS Rep Course

Melbourne

- April 14
- July 21
- October 27

Country

- March 24 Geelong
- May 26 Morwell
- July 28 Portland
- September 22 Shepparton
- November 24 Mildura