



# ETU OHS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2005

## IN THIS ISSUE

**OHS PERSON IN FOCUS—** 2  
**DAVID DE GRAAFF**

**DOCUMENT IN REVIEW—** 2

**OHS ACT 2004**

**OHS HAZARD** 2  
**HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES**

## MAIN STORY—MERCY HOSPITAL, AFTER THE FIRE BY PETER AUDINO (ETU OHS REP)

On Christmas day 2004, the Mercy Hospital Services Board caught fire and was extensively damaged and had to be replaced. Patients were relocated as it affected the whole electrical services of the hospital.

Many safety considerations were addressed in the initial planning of the new Services Board.

All existing power and light circuits that were suspect had to be isolated. The next priority was to set up temporary switchboards and replace all existing lighting with temporary lights.

Other safety issues included traffic control, the area affected was in a loading dock and there was significant amount of work to be done off scissor lifts in the area. To control this hazard a guardhouse was set up at the entry with two traffic controllers with radio

communication to control all movement in the area. Along the loading dock edge, fall protection was placed to protect the workers.

Issues of worker's fatigue lead to the implementation of three eight hour shifts, this was done in conjunction with the OHS and Engineering hospital support staff.

During the course of the refit, a small amount of asbestos was identified, and workers were made aware. Affected areas were sealed and cleaned up.

During the course of the eight days, all works were done under JSAs and were monitored by the OHS rep and steward on the Job.

When the new switchboard

was in and ready, we used the ETU energisation procedure to ensure things went smoothly and without incident.

Originally the Hospital expected to be offline for over a month. The new Switchboard had power applied after eight days and the hospital was operational the following week.

As the OHS rep it was satisfying to see JSAs and procedures in place in such a potentially "rushed" emergency situation and proves that safety standards need not be sacrificed in the need for expediency.

I commend all the tradesmen on their co-operation and professionalism.

## OHS Reps Meetings 2005 10am—12pm

- 24th February - Melbourne
- 24th March—Geelong ETU Office
- 28th April—Melbourne
- 19th May—ETU Morwell
- 30th June—Melbourne
- 21st July—Portland Trades Hall
- 25th August—Melbourne
- 22nd September—Sheparton Trades Hall
- 27th October—Melbourne
- 17th November—Geelong ETU Office
- 8th December—Melbourne

## NO MORE NEED TO DRILL HOLES IN SITE SHEDS

There is a new innovation on the market for the site shed industry.

This product is a bracket which is permanently attached to the roof of the site shed, and allows for a piece of timber to be fitted into the bracket on site. The power cable can be attached to the timber in the bracket, thus eliminating the need to drill holes behind the

switchboard of the building.

By using this roof bracket, the electrical installation is safe from puncturing and moisture entering the electrical circuits.

For further information contact Skyhooks Industries on (03) 9351 0371 or fax (03) 9351 0372



## OHS PERSON IN FOCUS—DAVID DE GRAAFF

I have been representing E.T.U Construction Electricians and construction workers for about the past 6 years.

My passion for the role started when I was an apprentice. I was left on the job alone to wire my bosses new factory and being the enthusiastic apprentice; I went at it without instruction or appropriate supervision erecting an old steel mobile scaffold, to wire the factory lighting.

Whilst installing the factory lighting I pulled myself along the

rafters when the scaffold tipped and rolled out from under me sending me down 6m+ to the concrete.

Literally knocking into me the ramifications of insufficient training, instruction and appropriate supervision.

Over the years I've seen many close calls! Severe electric shocks, eye injuries, cut's etc

What I would most like to

see is the employer driving health and safety and not encouraging workers to cut corners through intimidation and pitting worker against worker which in my opinion leads to poor and unsafe work practice's by employees.

I think work practices have improved but we still have a long way to go before we can call a work place a safe place to be.



Photo David de Graaff

ETU Safety Committee Member

## DOCUMENT IN REVIEW—OHS ACT 2004

The new OHS ACT 2004 will come into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2005. The new ACT is a totally new document which will need careful reading to understand the differences in the legislation.

Some of the Key changes are:

Section 35 and 36, Duty of employers to consult. Section 36 gives a definition of how employees are to be consulted regarding OHS Concerns in the workplace.

**Division 2, Section 47 to 52. Grouping of employees of Multiple Employers.** This section describes what constitutes the DWG for an OHS rep of multiple employers. This section is a new inclusion.

**Section 55, Term of Office,** An OHS rep for a DWG holds office not exceeding 3 yrs.

**Section 57, Election of Deputy OHS reps.** This allows for the provision of a

deputy OHS rep and the powers that may be exercised by that deputy.

**Section 67, Obligation to train OHS reps,** Employers must allow OHS reps to attend the following courses, an initial course of training in OHS after being initially elected and a refresher course at least once a year thereafter.

**Part 14 Repeal of old ACT and transitional provisions,**

This section gives the OHS rep an understanding of how some of the legislation from the old ACT works in conjunction with the new Legislation.

The OHS ACT of 2005 is a totally new document and will require substantial revision by current OHS reps to gain an understanding of the new legislation.

The new OHS ACT can be viewed on the government web site [www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au](http://www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au)

## OHS HAZARD—HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

“Hazardous substances” are substances that have the potential to harm human health. They may be liquids, solids or gases. When used in the work place, these substances often generate vapours, fumes, dusts and mists. A wide range of industrial chemicals are classified as hazardous.

Hazardous substances may enter the body in a number of

ways, depending on the substance and how it is used (the nature of the work). The major routes of exposure to hazardous substances in the workplace are inhalation and skin contact or absorption. these substances may also be ingested, or injected into the body.

Hazardous substances may

cause immediate or long term health effects.

Exposure to these substances may result in poisoning, irritation, chemical burns, sensitisation, cancer, diseases of certain organs such as the skin, lungs, liver, kidneys and nervous system. The severity of the health effects depends on

the substance and the dose absorbed.

A material safety data sheet (MSDS) describes the identity, properties, health hazards, precautions for use and safe handling of a hazardous substance. The MSDS provides vital information for end-users, who must know how to use hazardous substances safely in the work place.