



ETU OHS NEWSLETTER

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IN THIS ISSUE

OHS PERSON IN FOCUS— 2

RANDALL LEE

Testing and tagging of electrical equipment on construction sites 2

Introduction of insulated pins on plug tops 2

OHS Reps Meetings 2005 10am—12pm

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

MAIN STORY—Why be an Occupational Health and Safety Representative?

The Australian National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC), have estimated that there are more than 2000 fatalities from workplace accidents and diseases per annum. This figure is only an estimate, because the long latency period of some diseases and the difficulty in relating some conditions to periods of work makes it difficult to quantify the precise number of deaths. However, the figure of around 2000 is taken to be an accurate estimate by NOHSC, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/RB/2004-05/05rb07.pdf>

This means approximately 2000 people die in Australia each year

as a direct result of their job. Ask yourself could this figure be lowered if we had more OH&S Reps.

I believe the answer is YES.

According to the Victorian Government's Better Health Channel website between 1989 and 1992, 3627 Australians lost their lives in work-related accidents — a yearly average of 1209. Between 1997 and 2003, 2254 workers were killed at work — a yearly average of 376.

While these figures show a dramatic decrease in the number of the workplace deaths, the decrease mainly occurred in unionised workplaces, particularly those organised by militant unions.

<http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2004/597/597p11.htm>

Note that the figures from the Victorian government website are for accidents only they do not include the hundreds of people that die each year from work place related diseases. But if only one person a year dies as a result of their work it's still one to many. Clearly what the figures show is that OH&S Reps **DO** make a difference.

So why be an OH&S Rep?

Because you being there may just prevent someone from dying or being seriously injured due to their work.

By Trevor Darwall.

Regional OHS Reps meeting — Geelong

Geelong OHS reps from the ETU meet for the first time in the Geelong office of the ETU to discuss various safety issues on the 24th March.

A need was identified by the Union to bring information out to the rural and regional areas, The ETU's OHS Officer Allan Mulvena Chaired the meeting along with 9 OHS reps from the

district.

The hot topic at the moment is the introduction of the new OHS Act in July and the changes to the legislation. Allan delivered a presentation to the members and other safety issues currently in the electrical industry.

There were representatives from different sectors of the electrical industry. The next regional



meeting is scheduled for the Morwell ETU office on the 19th May beginning at 10.00 am.

OHS PERSON IN FOCUS— RANDALL LEE

Working in the construction industry for 15 years, I have been representing workers OH&S interests for the last 4 years. As an apprentice I was injured at work due to some bad work practices used by my employer, which showed me how vulnerable inexperienced and untrained people are to injury. A working holiday in the U.K led me to realise how important it is to protect our standards of safety on the job.

With the current attacks on workers rights being undertaken

by the federal government I see my role as vital to ensuring that workers are not exposed to increasing risks in the workplace. It's so important now to keep our workers informed of changes that are happening and work with them to help improve the way we do our job.

Education of our members in new legislation such as the revised OH&S Act and overseeing improvements to industry work practices such

as temporary wiring are even more important today with companies placing so much emphasis on cutting costs and working to unrealistic deadlines.

It is totally rewarding to see a group of individuals coming together on a job to make sure that theirs and their workmates safety isn't compromised by the way they do their work. Guiding them to do that is one of the most important roles on the job.



Photo Randall Lee
Safety Committee Member

TESTING AND TAGGING ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

Questions have been asked in relation to the time periods that electrical equipment on construction sites are required to be inspected and tested to ensure for the safe use of the operator.

There are several documents that relate to this issue in Victoria. Australian Standard AS/NZS 3012, AS/NZS 3760 and the Victorian Industry Standard.

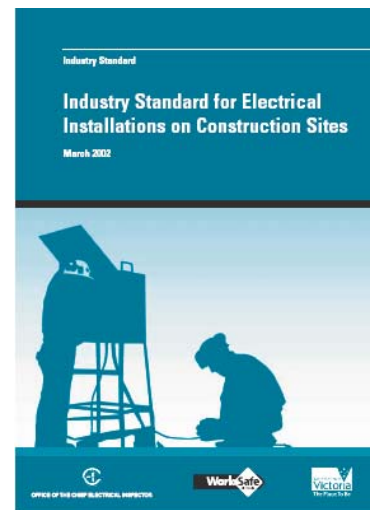
The Industry Standard for Electrical Installations on Construction Sites March 2002, Section 4.3 requires:

4.3 Testing of Plant, portable electrical equipment and appliances, and flexible electric cords

All Plant including portable electrical equipment and flexible electrical cords, shall be visually inspected for wear and mechanical damage, and tested in ac-

cordance with AS/NZS 3760 for earthing continuity, and insulation resistance.

Inspection and testing should be undertaken by a licensed electrician or electrician supervised (ES or L) prior to its first use, and every 3 calendar months there after, while being used on the site.



OHS- INSULATED PLUG TOPS

As of the 4th April 2005 the OCEI has regulated that suppliers and retailers will not sell un-insulated 3-pin 230-volt plug tops. As testing and tagging occurs in the future, plug tops shall be replaced if they do not meet the requirements of AS/NZS 3760.

This includes that portable electrical equipment and appliances and flexible

electrical cords be visually inspected for wear and mechanical damage. For further information contact the OCEI.

This does not mean that plug tops already in service need to be replaced, but should a plug top be damaged and need to be replaced or a flexible extension cord or lead on an

appliance becomes damaged and a plug top needs to be fitted to the repaired extension cord or lead a new plug top with the insulated pins is required to be fitted.

Obviously this equipment must be inspected, tested and tagged before being returned to service.

