



# ETU OHS NEWSLETTER

## OCTOBER 2006

### SAFETY FIRST OR PRODUCTION FIRST

**TRAINING DATES**  
**OHS—CONTACT**  
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**INITIAL 5 DAY**

To Be Advised

**1 DAY REFRESHER**

To Be Advised

This photo and most of the dialogue comes from Worksafe's Safety Soapbox Absolute Shocker of the Week (15 September 06).

The construction OH&S manager who came across this air compressor during a safety audit on a site found that a carpenter had this air compressor plugged into a construction switchboard whilst operating his pneumatic nail gun.

"I could hardly believe my eyes when I quickly realised that the outer housing for the electric motor was completely missing, exposing the live electrical windings on the motor and the terminals on the start-up capacitor. At the same time, the cooling fan (which had all but two blades smashed off) was exposed, and rotating at high speed, albeit out of balance!"

"After promptly directing the

carpenter to immediately switch off the compressor and disconnect the power supply, he advised that the damage occurred when he 'dropped' the compressor on the ground from the back of his ute whilst setting up earlier in the day.

"He also admitted that perhaps he shouldn't have plugged it in and used it!"

This should be a lesson to us all, here is an accident waiting to happen.

If we look after ourselves and others we would be a lot better off. OHS is not an add on, it is a conscious decision with forethought and planning. The sooner we realise that safety doesn't just happen, we make it happen, the better off we'll be.



**OHS Reps Meetings 2006**  
10am—12pm

**29th November**— Mallee Murray Trades and Labour Council 162 Seventh St Mildura

**December tbc**—Melbourne

### OH&S REPS SEMINAR— OCTOBER 25

There is no OHS Reps meeting at the ETU this month as the meeting date is the same as that of the annual OHS Reps Seminar.

By now all ETU OHS Reps should have received their application form in the mail along with the September Newsletter.

It is up to you to ensure that you fill out the application form and send it back to VTHC to ensure that you have a spot for the day.

Numbers are strictly limited so

get your paper work in early. As with any other training ensure that you provide your employer with the required 14 days notice of your intention to attend.

The venue is the Palladium at Crown, 8 Whiteman Street Southbank. Crown car park offers a discounted rate of \$8 to conference delegates. Please present your completed conference registration form to receive this discount.



**25 OCTOBER 2006**  
**WORK SAFE WEEK 2006**

**HEALTH & SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES SEMINAR**



## OIL FILLED CIRCUIT BREAKER FAILURE

The Mines Inspectorate of Queensland's Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water has issued a Safety Alert after a high voltage circuit breaker failed, resulting in an electrician receiving burns when sprayed with high temperature oil.

The electrician was attempting to operate an 11kV oil circuit breaker (OCB) that had tripped out on an earth leakage fault.

The metal tank of the 11 kV Reyrolle LM23T oil filled circuit breaker failed and high temperature oil sprayed onto the victim's arm. He received burns to his right forearm and minor

heat trauma to the right side of his face. Hot oil also ignited drawings on top of the drawing cabinet in front of the switchboard along with the spare air-conditioning unit filters at the rear of the switchboard.

This incident is still under investigation and as such there are no findings as to the cause of the incident.

### Recommendations

The recommendations that would generally apply to this type of electrical switchgear include:

- Ensure OCBs are regularly

maintained.

- Follow the manufacturer's maintenance procedures.
- Consider older electrical equipment and where it is in its life cycle.
- Ensure there are procedures in place covering action to be taken after trips on high voltage circuits.
- Identify what arc flash personal protective equipment is required.
- Restrict the storage of flammable materials in and around equipment.

- Ensure the doors to the switch-room are always readily accessible and include provision for quick egress.
- Ensure the availability of first aid materials.
- To reduce risk to acceptable levels, it may be necessary to move the operator away from the circuit breaker cabinet, necessitating the use of remote open/close facilities or some other mechanism.

For the full alert go to:

[www.nrm.qld.gov.au/mines/safety\\_alert149.pdf](http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/mines/safety_alert149.pdf)

## GOING SMOKE FREE

In response to growing evidence of the harmful health effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) and the threat of litigation, many workplaces have become smokefree.

In 1988, just 17% of workers reported working in a smokefree environment, however by 1999; this had increased to more than 70%. These figures are likely to have increased due to recent legislation requiring Victoria's restaurants and shopping centres to become smokefree.

### Health Reasons

Tobacco smoke is harmful to the health of non-smokers and has been classified as a Class A carcinogen, one that is a cause of cancer in humans.

### Findings of recent studies

- A Canadian study found that hospitality workers exposed to ETS could see their risk of lung cancer triple.
- A United States study found regular exposure

to ETS nearly doubled the risk of heart attack.

- A Scottish study found that non-smoking workers exposed to ETS suffered a reduction of up to 10% in lung function.
- A New Zealand study found that non-smokers exposed to ETS were more than 80% more likely to suffer a stroke.
- A Japanese study found that just 30 minutes of

exposure to ETS could damage the heart of a healthy non-smoker.

Non-smokers who are exposed to ETS have higher rates of illness and death from Lung cancer, heart disease, asthma attacks and stroke and workers who both smoke and are exposed to certain occupational hazards in the work place are at a greater increased risk, particularly if they are exposed to asbestos, dusts and chemicals.

## AIRBORNE PARTICULATES—IDENTIFY IF IT'S A HAZARD

Airborne contaminants that can be inhaled directly into the lungs can be classified on the basis of their physical properties as gases, vapours or particulate matter.

Airborne particulates consist of discrete particles and may be further characterised as dusts, fumes, smokes or mists

depending on the nature of the particle and its size. Definitions for each of these terms are given in the Glossary of Terms. In common usage, the terms 'dust' and 'particulates' are often used interchangeably. There are four factors which determine the degree of hazard associated with a

specific airborne particulate, namely:

- the type of particulate involved and its biological effect;
- the concentration of airborne particulates in the breathing zone of the worker;
- the size of particles

present in the breathing zone; and

- the duration of the exposure (possibly in years).
- It is important that the workplace is assessed to clearly identify airborne particulates so they can be controlled if they are a hazard.