



ETU OHS NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2004 CHRISTMAS EDITION

MAIN STORY—A FOLLOW UP FROM LAST MONTH

IN THIS ISSUE

OHS PERSON IN FOCUS— 2

DEREK JONES

DOCUMENT IN REVIEW— 2

OHS (PREVENTION OF FALLS) REGULATIONS

OHS HAZARD — 2

WORKING IN THE HEAT

OHS Reps Meetings 2005
10am—12pm

24th February - Melbourne

24th March—Geelong Trades Hall

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

Work Dead or Be Dead

Following up from the story last month, there has been further incidents where electrical workers have been hurt.

This incident related to work near a bus duct with a perforated base cover. This worker is lucky to be alive, some battle scars will remain but the situation could have been much worse. We must consider our safety as a number one priority not just rely on good luck.

The OCEI advises that a high percentage of electrical incidents they attend where electrical workers are injured involve the electrical worker working on a switchboard that is live. The injuries sustained have ranged from relatively minor burns to third degree burns to a high percentage of the body. On some occasions

the worker has been placed in an induced coma at the hospital as a necessary part of the treatment.

As part of the investigation, the OCEI speaks to the person the work is being done for often to find that there is no reason the work could have been done dead but the electrical worker never bothered to ask they only presumed it was necessary.

From time to time the electrical worker may be called upon to undertake functions which include working on or near live exposed electrical equipment. Live electrical work must only be undertaken when an adequate risk assessment process has been undertaken.

The investigations have

revealed that at times electrical workers have used insulated tools to protect themselves from electric shock but have failed to recognise that the metal part of the tool such as the tip of the screwdriver can cause shorts between phases or phase to earth which results in arcing causing serious burns and or major damage to electrical equipment.

The JSA should recognise all aspects of safety including adjacent live electrical equipment that may come into play depending on the type of work being performed. In a recent 6 months period, 14 electrical workers were injured while working in live conditions. **Please, do not become a statistic.**

THE DANGERS OF USING OCTOPUS STRAPS

A recent case involving an apprentice who lost the sight in one eye after a preventable injury illustrates the need for common sense workplace accident prevention.

Kim Shaw, WorkCover partner at Maurice Blackburn Cashman's Ringwood office, said the injury was a simple one that could easily have been avoided with better

occupational health and safety procedures.

Kim said the young man was loading ladders onto a work van and securing them with octopus straps when the hook slipped and flicked him in the eye.

The 23 year old apprentice lost 100 per cent vision in his left eye, which was devastat-

ing for him.

"This serious injury would have been avoided if the employer had spent a few dollars and bought strapping to hold down the load," she said.

"It seems obvious that to use octopus straps for such a purpose is dangerous and puts workers at risk of serious Injury."

OHS PERSON IN FOCUS

DEREK JONES

I have been and OHS rep for the past 8 years representing members of the ETU.

The passion for taking on this role is due to the fact I witnessed a workplace fatality some years ago, which could have been avoided.

He was 43 years old at the time and had worked in the same industry as me for 15 years. It made me sick to the bone the way in which the employer attempted to discharge their

responsibilities and place the blame on him.

It is an ongoing struggle to keep the peg in the ground regarding OHS in the workplace as the bosses clearly want to cut corners on costs and this more often than not compromises safety.

I work in the lift industry, mainly in the construction sector and since deregulation of the lift industry, I have seen a

disregard for Australian Standards particularly AS4431, Guidelines for installation of new equipment.

It concerns me greatly that we have gone away from licensed mechanics and in the USA 15 states have pushed through for their mechanics to be licensed. I would like to see conformity between companies of their installation procedures, particularly motor room lifts.



Photo Derek Jones

DOCUMENT IN REVIEW—OHS (PREVENTION OF FALLS) REGULATIONS 2003

The regulations came into affect on 31st March 2004 and are applicable to all Victorian workplaces where there is a chance of someone falling more than two meters.

The regulations state, **“Your employer has an obligation to consult you,”** as long as it is practicable to do so, when the employer is doing the following activities that affect the members of your designated work group.

Identification of any risk that

Identification of any risk that may result in a worker falling more than two meters.

Assessment of any risks associated with the task.

Any risk control measures that your employer is considering putting in place to eliminate or reduce the risk of someone falling.

Your employer is also required to provide

information, instruction and training to any worker who is at risk of falling more than two meters.

The regulations also require that where a control measure is used to control the risk of a fall there must be in place an emergency procedure before the task is performed

For more information visit .
[Www.etu.asn.au](http://www.etu.asn.au)
www.workcover.vic.gov.au

OHS HAZARD – WORKING IN THE HEAT

Working in hot conditions can lead to a number of adverse effects generally called heat stress, in extreme circumstances this can be fatal.

Some of the environmental factors include air temperature, humidity and air movement, radiant temperature in the work place.

Some of the personal factors to

consider are types of clothing worn, level of working activity, level of fluid loss and replacement, affecting water and salt balance.

When the body is exposed to more heat than it can cope with, this leads to heat stress. The body tries to cope mainly by evaporation - sweating. Excessive sweating leads to loss of water and loss of salt, resulting in

from the body, dehydration and loss of salt, resulting in potentially serious health effects.

Some of the possible consequences of excessive heat are:-

Increase in the likelihood of accidents due to reduced concentration; skin rashes, heat illness, cramps,

exhaustion, heat stroke; aggravation of other medical conditions and illnesses E.g. high blood pressure.

Some considerations for OHS reps include talking to workers about heat and its effects on health: also identify if there are any heat problems associated with their work and whether seasonal heat may be a problem.