



# The Net

## From The Editor

Bushfires are natural phenomena most common in Australia but also occur in many places around the world where there is plenty of wood, leaves or forest that can burn. Australian Bushfires are particularly severe as eucalyptus tree leaves contain large amounts of oil that act much like any oil and burn very fast and hot.

Bushfires have existed for as long as trees have

been around. The kind of Australian trees that tend to burn most vigorously evolved millions of years ago to cope with the dry conditions as Continental Australia drifted slowly towards the equator.

While we all sat around trying to keep cool as the temperatures hit the 40 degree mark, spare a thought for those marvelous volunteers who are out fighting bush fires,

risking their lives to keep us and our assets safe. Volunteer fire fighters are a dedicated group of men and women, who unselfishly give their time and energy to battling fires and assisting people to keep safe against great odds. We thank you!

Ed.

### Special Interest:

- Queensland to lower workers comp premium
- SA: Seatbelts needed on all school buses: Democrats
- Victoria improves workplace safety record
- Major retailer fined \$100k after crippling injury to young worker
- NZ: 2006 off to tragic start
- Australian & NZ joint campaign on demolition and asbestos

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## Breaking News!!!

# Insurance Australia Group Limited (IAG) selects SafetySuite!

IAG has kicked off Phase 1 of a SafetySuite implementation to manage their workers compensation claims and self insurance electronic reporting.

Insurance Australia Group Limited (IAG) is Australasia's leading general insurance group. It owns some of the region's most respected insurance brands including NRMA Insurance, SGIO, SGIC, CGU and Swann Insurance in Australia, and State Insurance and NZI in New Zealand.



## Queensland to lower workers comp premium...

The Queensland government is set to reduce workers compensation premiums rates from \$1.43 for every \$100 in wages paid to \$1.20. The government said this will give a \$100-million boost to the state's businesses per year.

The rate reduction has meant premiums will be reduced by 16 per cent from what was already Australia's lowest rate. Currently for each \$100 of wages paid, Victoria charges \$1.80, NSW \$2.44, Western Australia \$2.32, South Australia \$3, and the federal government \$1.77.

Employment, Training and Industrial Relations Minister Tom Barton said the new rate would come into effect from 1 July 2006. "The average premium rate reductions are especially good news for employers who trade interstate, who not only get savings but a greater competitive edge", Mr Barton said. "It is estimated that the saving for Queensland industry more than \$125 million compared to 2004-05 premiums."

27<sup>th</sup> January 2006

CCH OHS News Headlines, [www.cch.com.au](http://www.cch.com.au)

## SA: Seatbelts needed on all school buses: Democrats

ADELAIDE, Jan 30 AAP - All school buses in South Australia should be fitted with seatbelts, say the Australian Democrats.

State Democrat MP Kate Reynolds said while thousands of parents driving students to school faced fines unless the children were wearing seatbelts, the same did

not apply to students travelling on buses, many of which are not fitted with seatbelts.

"If they go to school on a school bus, the kids are at risk of being flung around or even thrown out of the vehicle," Ms Reynolds said.

"School buses should be

fitted with seatbelts. All school buses should offer the same level of protection and safety as cars.

"It's a crime that the (state) government doesn't give the same protection to kids in buses as kids in cars."

Meanwhile, the Greens

used the start of the SA school year today to call for smaller class sizes, with no more than 20 students.

30<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
CCH

OHS News Headlines,  
[www.cch.com.au](http://www.cch.com.au)

## Victoria improves workplace safety record!

Workplace related fatalities have fallen dramatically in 2005 according to new figures released by the Victorian Government today.

The Minister for Workcover, John Lenders, congratulated Victorian companies and employees for a year of record safety which finished with 11 fewer fatalities than 2004.

"Despite a significant decrease in the number of injuries and fatalities, all Victorians should remain vigilant to ensure this continues throughout 2006," Mr Lenders said.

"In 2005 Victorian

workplace deaths were at their lowest level since records began and the rate of workers being injured was also at generational lows.

"The figures demonstrate that Victorians are taking safety seriously."

Last year 18 fatalities occurred at Victorian workplaces, down from 29 in 2004.

The majority of fatalities were caused by falling from heights, forklifts and caused by cars, trucks and trailers.

WorkSafe end of financial year figures also show the largest reduction in the

number of WorkCover claims since 1997-1998 and a 3.8 per cent decrease in the number of serious injuries and workers visiting hospital because of an injury.

Mr Lenders said following the introduction of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 in July this year the figures could improve even further.

"The new Occupational Health and Safety Act - the first new workplace safety laws for twenty years - has been a success in its first six months.

Mr Lenders said other highlights for the VWA this

year included:

- WorkCover rates cut to an historic low, delivering a \$170 million saving and major competitive boost to Victorian businesses.
- A 10 per cent cut to the average premium rate for 2005-06 saving Victorian businesses \$170 million and reduce the average rate to 1.8 per cent - equal to the lowest level in the scheme's history.
- A \$155 million package of initiatives to benefit injured Victorian workers and their families.

10<sup>th</sup> January 2006

Contact Michael Birt, VWA  
[www.workcover.vic.gov.au](http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au)



# Major retailer fined \$100,000 after crippling injury to young worker...

One of Australia's biggest retailers, Woolworths Limited, has been convicted and fined \$100,000 for inadequately training a young worker who was seriously hurt while lifting a 20kg bag of onions.

Woolworths pleaded guilty in the Melbourne Magistrates court today to two charges relating to failing to provide and maintain a safe workplace and for inadequately training a 17-year-old casual worker at its now-closed Safeway store at Mulgrave.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said ensuring people were properly trained reduced the incidence of manual handling injuries and in some cases, injuries that could not be treated.

"Workers must be properly trained and supervised, particularly if they are young or inexperienced. They must also have the equipment to do their job without suffering a tragic, permanent, injury.

"This case is a reminder of the consequences which can arise from inadequate health and safety practices."

Magistrate Phillip Goldberg was told the tasks of unloading produce, moving pallets with a pallet jack, stocking produce and handling empty pallets and waste products had all resulted in injuries in Woolworths stores before this incident.

The Occupational Health and Safety (Manual Handling) Regulations 1988 mandated that risks to health and safety had to be examined and assessed, together with the requirement that employees be provided with appropriate training. Neither of these requirements were met.

Part-time shop assistant Michael Collins collapsed a short time after lifting the bag of onions which gave him a sharp pain in his back in April 1999. He never walked again. Mr Collins died in June last year from an unrelated incident.

WorkSafe told the court that although Mr Collins remembered seeing an induction video which had a small portion on lifting when he began working at Safeway in 1997 there was:

- no instruction on stock handling,
- there was no formal process for risk assessments in stores,
- the Glen Waverley outlet did not have a health and safety representative and
- store managers had no training in conducting hazard identification, risk assessment or control.

In sentencing Woolworths, Magistrate Goldberg said the company was large with considerable resources and should have done more to train its workforce however he noted improvements had been made after the incident.

"In 1999 it was nothing new to be concerned about health and risks with respect to manual handling," he said.

Mr Merritt said manual handling injuries accounted for about 46% of all WorkCover claims. Nearly 43,000 manual handling injuries have been reported in Victoria in the past three financial years.

"This comes at an enormous cost to the community in both personal and financial terms. In some cases the injuries are truly life-changing, not just for the worker, but also family members who often become carers.

"A large number of people coming into the workforce at this time are like Michael, young and relatively inexperienced. They should not be exposed to risk.

"The causes of manual handling injuries are well known as is what can be done to prevent them.

"In very many cases simple measures like providing suitable equipment, appropriate workplace design, training and supervision can make a significant long-term difference to someone's life."

WorkSafe produces information about manual handling issues. It can be obtained on the web at [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au), or by calling the advisory service on 1800-136-089.

## The charges:

Sections 21(1)&(2)(a) and s21 (2)(e) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985.

s21 Duties of employers

(1) An employer shall provide and maintain so far as is practicable for employees a working environment that is safe and without risks to health.

(2) Without in any way limiting the generality of sub-section (1), an employer contravenes that subsection if the employer fails –

(a) to provide and maintain plant and systems of work that are so far as is practicable safe and without risks to health.

and

(e) to provide such information, instruction, training and supervision to employees as are necessary to perform their work in a manner that is safe and without risks to health.

20<sup>th</sup> January 2006  
Contact Michael Birt, VWA  
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## NZ: 2006 off to tragic start

A 15-year student has become the 9th person to be killed at work so far this year.

The student had a holiday job at Whitford Landfill in east Auckland, and was believed to be collecting windblown refuse when the tractor he was driving overturned yesterday. The boy was found by other landfill workers pinned under a rear wheel.

The Department of Labour has launched an investigation into the accident. The tractor had seatbelts and rollover protection fitted, but initial indications show the boy was not wearing a seatbelt. People over the age of 15 are legally able to drive tractors in a work environment, so long as they are properly trained and supervised. Chief advisor for health and safety Mike Cosman said 2006 couldn't have got off to a worse start.

"It's a real tragedy that we are dealing with so many fatal accidents in such a short space of time." Mr Cosman said while the nature of the accidents were all quite different, seven of the deaths were caused by crushing injuries. "A lack of concentration or disregard for basic safety precautions seem to be common factors in these accidents."

Holiday periods could be trying times for employers, workers and the self-employed, he said. Students and young people being employed for short-term positions during the holidays were also vulnerable because they might not have the physical or emotional maturity, or the level of skills or experience required to carry out the job safely, and therefore supervision may have to be higher than usual.

Workplaces might be operating on a skeleton staff, have minimal supervision, or have only essential maintenance work going on, he added. "People may also be tired, rushing to finish work, making use of the long daylight hours or simply not have adjusted their minds from 'holiday mode' to the level of concentration required for a hazardous work environment."

Fatal accidents reported to the Department of Labour in 2006 include:

- 17 January – Student landfill labourer crushed under overturned tractor in Auckland
- 10 January – Self-employed mowing contractor crushed under overturned mower near Lyttelton
- 10 January – Road worker crushed under overturned road roller in Ongarue, Waikato
- 10 January – Nineteen-year old farm trainee crushed while loading bulls onto a truck in Fairlie
- 10 January – A roofer fell from a height of 10 metres while working on a Whangarei building site
- 9 January – Tree feller struck in the head by a falling tree in Northland
- 7 January – Napier transportation firm manager crushed in a container-lifting device
- 6 January – Factory maintenance worker crushed between an elevating work platform and an overhead pipe in Auckland
- 6 January – Farmer crushed under a bulldozer in Culverden

NZ Department of Labour, [www.osh.dol.govt.nz/news/press.shtml](http://www.osh.dol.govt.nz/news/press.shtml)

## Australian & NZ joint campaign on demolition and asbestos

Demolition and Asbestos work has been identified by Australia's and New Zealand's Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities as an area of significant risk requiring a coordinated approach within the construction industry.

The workplace safety authorities have joined forces to mount a coordinated campaign of inspector visits to

demolition sites throughout Australia and New Zealand.

The campaign will run from 20 February 2006 to 31 March 2006 targeting residential demolition sites, commercial demolition sites and asbestos removal work associated with any of these demolition sites.

Inspectors will pay particular attention to

issues such as;

- public protection;
- site supervision;
- planning for demolition work;
- work at heights; and
- asbestos removal activities.

All detected instances of immediate risk or non-compliance will result in appropriate compliance and enforcement action.

Advice and information on

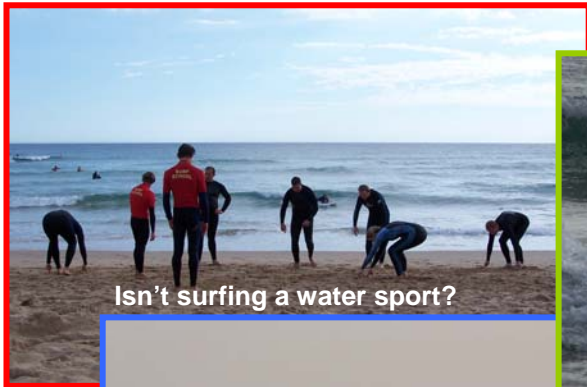
ensuring a compliant Demolition and Asbestos worksite is available from WorkSafe [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)

Department of Consumer & Employment Protection WA [www.safetyline.wa.gov.au](http://www.safetyline.wa.gov.au)



## Spy Eye: C-Net News!!

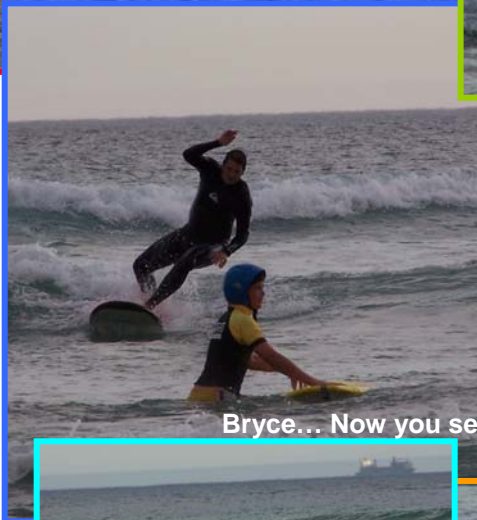
On the 19th of January the Solutions Group members and Development & Support Manager packed up and went on a road trip to Point Lonsdale for a 3 day getaway including pool competitions, surfing lessons, watching tennis and cricket matches, lots of bacon, eggs, pizza and beer (poor Jane)... oh and not forgetting some workshops on future AWP enhancements (poor everyone)! Some great new functionality was designed which is now being compiled into formal specifications. Stay tuned for the next SNUG (date to be announced) where we will run a validation session to clarify the new enhancements prior to their release.



Isn't surfing a water sport?



Jeremy... "No it's my wave"



Bryce... Now you see him, now you don't!!



Jane... talking...



Anton and Zig... cruising along!!



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## About C-Net

C-Net is an Australian owned company that specialises in SAP based OH&S Solutions. C-Net are the developers and distributors of "SafetyNet for SAP".

"SafetyNet for SAP" was developed for Australian & NZ companies who require an integrated, legislatively compliant and supported OH&S Solution to complement their integrated SAP infrastructure.



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