

the monitor

Keeping all those with an interest in OHS informed of current developments in workplace health and safety nationally and internationally



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Outgoing President's Report

At the Society's 2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM) in November the President's reins were handed over to long serving and active committee member Les Vogiatzakis. Les is also involved in the AIHS so will slide into the role with ease. Good luck Les.

The Society encountered problems attracting a suitable member to take on the Secretary's role and set off with a big hurdle due to illness of the incumbent. Again, Allaine stepped up to the plate and continued to perform the role is an acting capacity up to and including the AGM.

Being secretary of two other incorporated associations/clubs I decided to put my hand up for the position for 2021. This is my third executive role having been the long-term Treasurer for a number of years prior to taking on the President's role. Allaine remains on the committee and will concentrate on production of the popular periodical the Monitor.

Dave Lampard

Incoming President's Report

Dear member

It is with some excitement that we start 2021.-. a number change on the calendar for some...- a blur in the distant past for others. Yet, the same shared goals for the "Society". Less dramatic than the millennium bug prelude perhaps, in the time of a very active, actual, still evolving bug.

Based on the elephant in the room (COVID-19 and 2020-21 variants – the bug), we as the Society will continue to do things the way we should, as professionals. Applying Government guidelines, and our own professional capacity beyond the minimum.

As a non-profit association we will continue to support a wide range of industries and professionals engaged in occupational health in Western Australia, and our international members as well.

2021 will be supported by more virtual meetings for members. We will be trying hard to follow member activity and their involvement. As epidemiologists, medical practitioners, occupational hygienists,

consultants, educators, training providers, etc. we have a fair boot of professional capacity available. We also recognise the world of work has not slowed down in most sectors and has breached fatigue conditions in others. Not just mental health and wellness limits, but the opportunities for business leaders, and professionals to close the gap between the office and the coal-face.

We will continue to drive an awareness of what our members do, sharing independent, professional viewpoints to assist dealing with the hard, grey and obtuse concerns many of our members come across daily, and not at liberty to share details, yet are still seeking a solution for a particular unresolved problem. We will still provide informal events to support that, with food and drink for those who can partake, and support virtual presentations to assist those who cannot.

We will continue to support Occupational Health and Safety, in that order, and continue to provide an independent, rational and professional view of the trends impacting our members and their organisations, including statutory reforms. I look forward to putting a smile on as many faces as possible, too.

Les Vogiatzakis

**President
Occupational Health Society of Australia**

Bio – Les Vogiatzakis



Les's experience in occupational health & safety started in 1995 while posted in Mt Magnet as a secondary science teacher as part of his 'country service'. Exposure to underground mining started there, not to mention time as a very busy volunteer fireman. That included

wandering through an operational CIL plant in Cue during HAZMAT training, and his first non-textbook experience of the use of sodium cyanide, and other reagents he is specialised in.

After making it back to the city, he started OH&S post graduate studies in 1997-1998 at Curtin University which were completed to move away

from the education profession. Change is a good thing.

Les then worked with the competent authority for the 'The Department of Minerals and Energy' as an explosives and dangerous goods regulator, then quickly moved into major hazards. As a regulator, Les was jointly accountable and responsible for verification of risk mitigation and control, and process and public safety management of the top 78 chemical manufacturing, storage and handling facilities in Western Australia.

He was subsequently employed by one of them (Coogee Chemicals) to ensure safety cases were robust across all sites, and subsequently did the same with Matrix Composites and Engineering.

Les also worked as a safety consultant and chemical safety and dangerous goods specialist in 2004 since leaving the regulatory authority, as it's really fun to him and better than sleeping through action films.

Les has been responsible for drafting, establishing, implementing and maintaining safety cases, safety management systems and preparing and validating quantitative, semi quantitative and qualitative risk assessments for many operators. That includes verification of critical controls and instrumentation, and plant condition verification, including vessels.

Les has the capacity to draft and audit company safety cases and safety management systems, and is happy to help companies to do the best they can for their people, property and the environment at all times (and their shareholders, neighbours and surrounding communities).

As an alumnus from both Curtin University and Edith Cowan University, Les has happily been a mentor for many exceptional OHS, HSE and science students from Curtin and ECU since 1995.

Les is also very good at environmental rehabilitation and remediation, people rehabilitation and task improvements and restrictions for people who can return to work. He is extremely supportive of a positive recovery work controls for people who have injured themselves from working hard, no matter when throughout their career.

Les has just become the Society's new President.



Membership now due

You should have received your membership renewal notice by now. If not please contact the Secretary. Payment as soon as possible would be appreciated. This will allow the Committee to determine what funds might be available to organise events.

The Secretary, Dave Lampard has provided the following advice to members re renewal.

Members have enjoyed a long period of free membership and even two no charge short evening presentation events in 2020.

If you do not have internet banking, then direct transfer to the Society's account can be made to BSB# 066161 A/C# 10037010. If work restricts attending at a bank, then the transaction can be made at an ATM if the bank is closed or the queue too long.

Have the \$50 note ready. Put your credit card into the ATM and follow the deposit and transfer transaction procedure. A touch screen is available to type in your Surname and fees. Obtain a receipt from the ATM. Done. Most banks will help you if unsure of the procedure.

The Treasurer will see your transaction on the CBA Bank Statement and advise me to send out your membership certificate renewal. You can further confirm payment by emailing the payment details to ohswa@outlook.com.au.

Receiving the Monitor depends on your membership renewal

Email: ohswa@outlook.com.au

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IN EVENTS

Annual General Meeting 2020

The Society's AGM was held on 25 November at the WA Police Museum premises in Highgate. It was disappointing that more members did not attend. The Society's Constitution requires 15 members to be present and given we did not have the required number, the AGM was declared closed and an Extraordinary Meeting called to progress business.

Congratulations to Les Vogiatzakis, who nominated for President and was elected unopposed. Janis Jansz once again nominated for Vic President and was elected unopposed. Lee Cherry once again nominated Treasurer and was elected unopposed and Dave Lampard nominated for Secretary and was elected unopposed.

Dr KC Wan and Peter Nicholls both nominated again as Committee members. Bronte Weekes, was co-opted onto the Committee for 2020, nominated for Committee. Allaine Coleman, the A/Secretary nominated to stay on as a Committee member. Peter Rohan and Gwen Dempsey are new to the Committee although both have been involved with the Society for a considerable length of time. Gwen has been a Committee member in the past as has Peter. Peter has also served as the President previously. As there were only 6 positions for Committee, all people who nominated were elected unopposed.

Fortunately, Sheryl Kelly is remaining as a co-opted member to assist with the compilation of the Monitor.



Following the meeting, members adjourned to the No Menu restaurant for a meal. The meal was fantastic. As the name indicates there is no menu and the chef simply provides courses at his discretion. The meal was a degustation which consisted of 5 courses. Patrons could have 6 or 7 courses but the members in attendance were more than sated with the 5 five courses nominated.

Work Health and Safety Bill 2019 passes

The Work Health and Safety (WHS) Bill 2019 was passed by the Western Australian Parliament on 3 November 2020.

The new WHS Act will not be operational until regulations are complete. Work to develop the regulations is underway and will continue in 2021.

When regulations are completed, the laws will cover about 1.2 million workers across all Western Australian workplaces bringing the state's work health and safety laws in line with most other Australian jurisdictions.

Reportedly WorkSafe WA will make resources available to assist workplaces to adapt to the new laws as they become operational.

Near record WHS fine imposed over teenager's death



A PCBU has been handed one of the highest WHS fines in NSW history for the preventable death of an 18-year-old worker.

District Court Judge Andrew Scotting fined GN Residential Construction Pty Ltd \$1.2 million, before reducing it by 25 per cent to \$900,000 for its plea of guilty to breaching sections 19 (Primary duty of care) and 32 (Failure to comply with health and safety duty—Category 2) of the NSW WHS Act.

The penalty was on par with NSW's other record safety fines of \$900,000, for Cudal Lime Products Pty Ltd.'s fatality-related category -1 breach and \$1

million, for WGA Pty Ltd's "blatant disregard" of its safety duties around high-voltage powerlines.

GN was the principal contractor on a development site in Macquarie Park, and engaged Synergy Scaffolding Service Pty Ltd to design, erect, maintain and dismantle a 13-level-high scaffold with a nine-level hoist platform at the site.

In April last year, Future Form Group Australia Pty Ltd apprentice Christopher Cassaniti and his co-worker Kahled Wehbe were performing work directly underneath the scaffold when it collapsed, trapping them in rubble and debris.

Cassaniti died from crush injuries. Wehbe suffered a broken pelvis, shoulder, legs and ribs, and severe bruising.

Several days after the incident, SafeWork NSW revealed it had issued a prohibition notice to the site.

Judge Scotting heard that at the time of the fatality, the scaffolding was being progressively removed and the hoist had been overloaded with pallets of bricks to take advantage of that piece of equipment before it was dismantled.

He also heard the development's perimeter scaffold was dismantled prior to the hoist platform's scaffold, and neither GN nor Synergy clarified whether this altered the load rating of the hoist.

In October 2018, GN discovered that various trade workers at the site were tampering with and removing scaffold ties and arranged for Synergy to conduct weekly inspections of the scaffolding, but no inspections were conducted in the month leading up to the fatality.

When the structure collapsed, there were no ties securing it to the building. The risk posed by the lack of ties to the building were known, the complete absence of ties before the collapse would have been obvious if a visual inspection had been conducted. No steps had been taken to inspect the scaffold since 5 March 2019.

The steps to be implemented were simple and inexpensive. The extent of the harm caused by the offence is substantial.

Source – OHS Alert

Facebook photo leads to sacking for safety breach



A worker who took his young son to work and placed him in a forklift to entertain him "acted recklessly" and showed indifference to his employer's safety policies and liability risks.

The Jamieson Sales and Service Pty Ltd trade assistant's actions, in taking his 11-year-old son to the Adelaide workshop on the weekend to fix his car, involved a "sequence of interrelated decisions that reflected poor judgement" and "carried avoidable risk to his employer", Fair Work Commission (FWC) Deputy President Peter Anderson said.

Mr Anderson went on to state that "the worker did not adequately calibrate his private instincts as a father with his responsibilities to his employer and he mixed private and workplace interests, and this clouded his judgement.

In April 2020, the worker attended his workplace with his son to change the brake pads on his private car, which the employer allowed where employees sought prior permission.

While he performed the 45-minute task, his son sat on the workshop floor nearby. The worker then lifted the boy into the forklift, showed him the controls and took a photo of him sitting in the vehicle unrestrained, subsequently posting the photo on Facebook. The employer summarily dismissed him for failing to get permission to work on his car in the workshop and for bringing a minor onto the premises.

The worker claimed he was unfairly dismissed, and the FWC found his purported failure to obtain permission to work on his vehicle was not serious misconduct in the circumstances. In taking his son to the premises, however, he "acted recklessly and outside the terms of any permission he was granted or considered he held to work on his

private motor vehicle", Deputy President Anderson found.

A child of that age had "limited capacity to maturely assess safety risks or control behaviour", he said.

The seriousness of the incident was aggravated by the fact that the worker and his son were within metres of an open pit and it was not plausible that the worker gave his undivided attention to his son at all times, the Deputy President said.

Further, a child sitting in the seat of a forklift presented a risk of a fall from height, he said.

"Whilst the worker was concerned as a parent to make sure his child did not get into trouble or wander too far, his actions reflected an indifference to his employer's safety policies and the risk and liability it carried should a safety incident with the child have occurred."

But the Deputy President found that while the worker's "failures of duty" provided a valid reason for his dismissal, they didn't warrant a summary dismissal, which made the sacking harsh. The inability to grasp his mistakes at the time or in the immediate aftermath was indicative of a lack of sensitivity to the worker's duty of care, especially on safety matters, and of the serious consequences for a business should its employees put themselves or others at risk.

The worker was awarded two weeks' pay plus superannuation, in compensation.

Company, director get high-range fines for sacking HSR

A company director, who falsely claimed a health and safety representative (HSR) was a poor performer and sacked him, after the HSR complained to a safety regulator, denied other employees the important protections provided by the elected role, the Federal Court has found.

Justice David O'Callaghan imposed near-maximum adverse action fines on Melbourne Precast Concrete Nominees Pty Ltd and director Thomas Pichler, after finding their breaches were "necessarily serious" because they affected the safety of workers. Precast and director Thomas Pichler breached the Commonwealth Fair Work Act in fraudulently claiming HSR Paul Hes had received the second lowest score in an employee skills evaluation and was selected for redundancy.

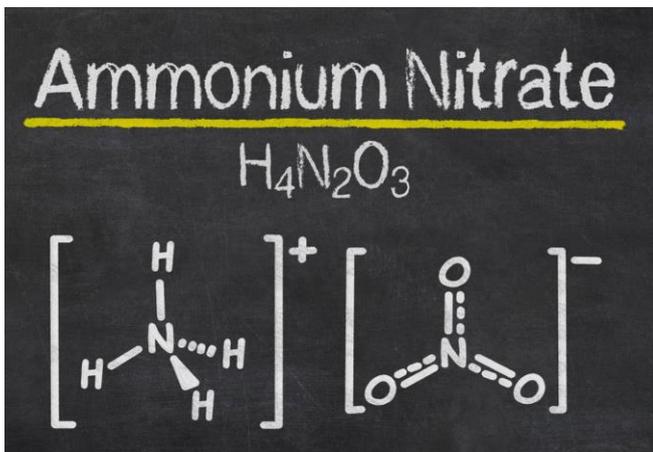
Justice O'Callaghan upheld the general protections claim brought by the CFMMEU and

HSR - Hes. He heard that prior to the dismissal, Pilcher accused HSR - Hes of "unlawfully holding meetings" on the health risks posed by heavy bushfire smoke early this year, and "running off" to complain to WorkSafe Victoria.

Justice O'Callaghan said Melbourne Precast and Pichler's breaches were particularly serious because an HSR's role under the Victorian OHS Act was an "an important one" as it involved securing the health, safety and welfare of workers through functions like "conducting inspections, representing workers at interviews concerning health and safety, issuing provisional improvement notices and directing workers to cease work" when an immediate health and safety threat arose. Further, their actions signalled to other workers that lawfully complaining to a safety regulator would be met with retaliation, Justice O'Callaghan added.

The company was fined \$50,000 and Thomas Pilcher \$10,000.

Safe Storage of Ammonium Nitrate



Western Australia manufactures and imports large amounts of ammonium nitrate (AN). All safety and security aspects of its manufacture, import, transport, storage and use are strictly regulated under the *Dangerous Goods Safety Act 2004*. The following documents have been compiled to assist in the safe storage and transport of AN.

[Dangerous Goods Safety Bulletin No.0320 - Safe storage of ammonium nitrate](#)

[Pamphlet - Safe storage and transport of ammonium nitrate](#)

[Safe storage and transport of Ammonium Nitrate - ThinkSafe Magazine vol. 2 no. 3 September 2020 - p. 4](#)

Falling object and vehicle deaths increase significantly

Australia's disappointing work-related fatality toll for 2019 can be attributed, in part, to a sharp increase in fatal vehicle collisions and deaths caused by falling objects, Safe Work Australia's new traumatic injury fatalities report shows.

Some 183 workers were fatally injured at work in 2019, compared to 146 in 2018, and equating to 1.4 fatalities per 100,000 workers.

In the new report, SWA stresses that while the death toll increased between 2018 and 2019, the rate has decreased by 53 per cent since 310 work-related traumatic injury fatalities were recorded in 2007.

It says 62 per cent of the 2019 fatalities occurred in three industries – transport, postal and warehousing (58 deaths), agriculture, forestry and fishing (30), and construction (26) – while agriculture had the worst fatality rate, at 9.1 per 100,000 workers.

The ACTU claimed the growing toll in the transport sector actually underestimated the fatality rate, with the deaths of delivery workers in the gig economy recorded as traffic accidents rather than workplace fatalities.

By mechanism, vehicle collisions (on public roads and otherwise) caused the most work-related fatalities, at 79, which marked a significant increase from the 44 vehicle collision deaths in 2018.

The number of workers (or work bystanders) fatally struck by falling objects also increased sharply, from 15 in 2018 to 21.

Other common fatal incident mechanisms in 2019 were falls from height (21 deaths), being hit by moving objects (13, down from 24 in 2018), being trapped by moving machinery (10), being trapped between stationary and moving objects (9) and contact with electricity (8).

Five people drowned in work-related incidents, and two were killed in work explosions. Some 72 per cent of 2019's fatalities involved vehicles, the report says.

[Work-related traumatic injury fatalities, Australia 2019, Safe Work Australia, November 2020](#)

WorkSafe New Zealand lays criminal charges over White Island volcano deaths

Criminal charges have been handed down by the New Zealand's workplace safety watchdog over last year's White Island volcanic eruption that claimed 22 lives and left dozens more with horrific burns.

Charges against 10 organisations and three individuals who took tourists to the country's most active volcano just weeks after the eruption threat alert level had been raised. This includes two tour company operators and two government agencies.

WorkSafe had investigated why 47 people, mainly Australian tourists, were on the island in December 2019 when a column of burning ash and steam blasted from a volcanic vent.

The prosecution by WorkSafe does not carry the threat of jail time for those who took tourists sightseeing on the island, with hefty fines being the maximum penalty.

The organisations involved could be fined up to NZ\$1.5 million, with individuals facing maximum fines of NZ\$300 000.



This aerial photo shows White Island after its volcanic eruption in December 2019. File picture: George Novak/New Zealand Herald via AP

Comparing legislation

Model WHS Act comparison table

The *model WHS laws* have been implemented in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Commonwealth.

Some jurisdictions have made minor variations to make sure the legislation is consistent with their relevant drafting protocols and other laws and processes.

The *model WHS Act* cross-comparison table summarises the similarities and differences between the *model WHS Act* and the *WHS Acts* of the jurisdictions that have adopted the *model Act*.

For information on the operation of *WHS* laws in your jurisdiction, please contact the *WHS* regulator in your state.

Workers' Compensation comparison schemes

Australia has 11 workers' compensation systems. Each of the eight Australian states and territories has their own workers' compensation scheme and the Commonwealth has three, including:

- *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*
- Seafarers under the *Seafarers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1992*
- *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004*.

See the latest *Comparison of Workers' Compensation Arrangements in Australia and New Zealand (2019)* report at Safe Work Australia site: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/comparison-workers>

The report provides detailed information about the different ways each state scheme deals with:

- coverage
- benefits
- return to work provisions
- self-insurance
- common law
- dispute resolution
- cross-border arrangements.

Sexual harassment taskforce launched for mining



The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) is introducing a taskforce to respond to sexual harassment in the mining sector, expanding its safety focus to “the safety of a whole person”.

The decision was sparked after the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Respect@Work Sexual harassment National Inquiry (2020) uncovered that 40 per cent of mining sector employees experienced sexual harassment in the past five years.

This ranked mining in the “substantially higher” category of 40 per cent or more, above the rate of 31 per cent across all industries in Australia.

The report also found that the likelihood of sexual harassment at work against women in mining is 74 per cent, more than twice of that for men (32 per cent).

MCA chief executive Tania Constable said the industry must take stronger action and lead a decisive response in abolishing sexual harassment from all mining sector workplaces.

She described the report findings around sexual harassment-related behaviour in the mining industry as “unacceptable” and “illegal”, vowing that the MCA would work together with mining companies to eradicate it.

Following the release of the (Respect@Work) report, the MCA established a taskforce to broaden its safety and health policy and develop a commitment to eliminating sexual harassment.

Workplace settings that are considered male dominated, such as mining, are more prevalent to sexual harassment due to the gender ratio, over-representation of men in senior leadership roles, the work nature being considered ‘non-traditional’ for women and a masculine workplace culture, according to the Respect@Work 2020 report.

In 2018-19, women made up just 16 per cent of workers in the mining industry, according to figures from the ABS Gender Indicators November 2019.

Source – Australian Mining Safe to Work

Non-slip-shoe trial slashes workplace slip and fall rates



High-grip non-slip shoes can reduce the rate of slips by workers by about 40 per cent, making their use an effective injury prevention strategy where eliminating slip risks is not practicable, researchers from the UK’s work safety regulator and other bodies have found.

From a study of nearly 5,000 National Health Service (NHS) staff, they found providing workers with slip-resistant footwear with the highest UK “GRIP-rating” reduced the rate of slips by 37 per cent, and the rate of falls resulting from slips by 49 per cent.

In a 14-week period, the workers provided with the special shoes reported a total of 2,633 slips, compared to 4,110 in the control group, where participants were instructed to wear their usual work shoes, the study found.

Slips, trips and falls are a major cause of workplace injury and account for 30 per cent of reported injuries in Great Britain.

The study results provide clear evidence that highly-slip-resistant footwear can reduce slips, falls and injuries, the researchers say.

Slip-resistant footwear reduces slips among National Health Service workers in England: a randomised controlled trial. Sarah Cockayne, et al, UK, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, online first January 2021, doi: 10.1136/oemed-2020-106914.

IN HEALTH



Heat stress at work

The Centre for Future Work have released a report which provides first-hand accounts of dangerous levels of heat stress experienced in a range of occupations – including construction, outdoor maintenance work, and food delivery riders.

The authors based at the Climate Justice Research Centre at UTS in Sydney, interviewed workers and trade union officials in several industries and confirmed that working in excess heat is becoming a more common occupational health and safety risk.

The report documents the negative effects of excess heat on physical health, mental alertness, and stress. It also compiled an inventory of union initiatives and workplace best practices for reducing and managing the risks of heat stress.

The key findings indicate that heat stress poses serious health and safety risks for many workers across Australia, and Australia must act on the causes of rising temperatures and changing weather patterns.

Four key groups of workers are at high risk of heat stress:

- Workers who work inside, in environments with poor climate control, or whose work requires them to be exposed to heat and humidity;
- Outdoor workers, especially those who are weather-exposed;
- Workers moving between different climates as part of their work (i.e., moving between extreme heat and cold); and
- Workers whose roles expose them to situational extreme heat, such as emergency workers and firefighters.

Other key findings include:

- Current labour protections, including health and safety laws, are inadequate.
- Many workers say that OHS policies might appear to offer protection, but in practice it is simply not the case.
- Workers say that employers do not want work to stop even when heat stress risk is very high and that employers prioritize productivity over worker health and safety.
- The hazardous heatwaves, air quality, and bushfire smoke over the recent Black Summer has emphasised the inadequacy of current OHS regulations.
- The conditions of a person's employment fundamentally shape their experience of heat stress. Workers who are employed casually, who work in labour hire arrangements, or who are gig workers, often have less capacity to take action on the effects of heat stress.
- The Australian Federal and State Governments must urgently review the management of the current and likely impacts of climate change for workers and develop national and state-based regulatory frameworks that provide strong protection in relation to heat stress and bushfire smoke.
- Governments and employers must be required to provide adequate resourcing for at-risk workers.
- Policymakers should strengthen current laws to ensure workers do not lose income when unable to work due to heat stress.

Workers need to be afforded greater protections to ensure their health and safety are paramount in extreme heat conditions. Research shows that current workplace conditions are woefully inadequate, while climate change will only serve to make conditions worse. Improving workplace practices for identifying and managing heat stress and empowering workers to refuse work under unsafe heat conditions, must be urgent priorities for employers, trade unions, and regulators.

Source – Australasian Mine Safety Journal

APP to measure predicted heat strain



Measuring and evaluating the parameters associated with predicted heat strain have always been a challenge for health and safety practitioners. A free app for calculating predicted heat strain has been created to assist personnel to evaluate potential heat stress risks through the input of known data.

This application allows the input a number of parameters associated with the environment, task and individual to evaluate the work scenario's potential risks and controls without requiring access to a computer.

The mobile phone application based on *Ergonomics of the thermal environment — Analytical determination and interpretation of heat stress using calculation of the predicted heat strain*.

The apps developments was funded by the University of Queensland and Rio Tinto to assist in the measurement of Predicted Heat Strain to a higher degree than was previously available.

Rational heat stress indices have been shown to provide a more accurate assessment of heat stress scenarios than many of the simpler and more commonly used empirical indices such as Effective Temperature (ET) and Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT).

A key advantage is that rational indices also provide an avenue for the health professional to assess potential heat strain using additional parameters as well as evaluate potential controls.

Despite this, they have not been as readily accepted and utilised. One of the barriers has been their complexity and the numerous calculations associated with their use, requiring access to a computer.

Based on the input data, the app uses a number of algorithms to produce predicted core body temperature and water loss graphs and reports.

It is envisaged that the app will become a useful tool for practising occupational health and safety professional in the investigation and control of heat stress in the field. Once only accessible to academics or with the purchase of expensive equipment, this free app will take heat stress assessment for the health and safety professional to another level.

Note: ISO 7933:2004 does not predict the physiological response of individual subjects, but only considers standard subjects in good health and fit for the work they perform. It is therefore intended to be used by ergonomists, industrial hygienists, etc., to evaluate working conditions.

Source – Australasian Mine Safety Journal

Sun protection for workplace safety



With 819 people no longer with us as a result of the insidious virus COVID-19 it sadly reminds me of another disease - skin cancer. Every year over 2000 people die of skin cancer-related diseases after exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the Australian sun.

Like COVID-19, these deaths are preventable with education and information around safe practices, including personal protective equipment and awareness.

UV is a workplace hazard for *all* outdoor workers every day of the year.

Australians working outdoors receive between 5 and 10 times the UV exposure than indoor workers.

It's not illegal to wear a singlet on-site, however, given the strength of the Australian sun, all workers and employers should be asking - is it the most appropriate PPE for working outside?

You may be in breach of the OHS regulations if you don't wear the appropriate PPE.



Most businesses should have a UV policy in place.

You can help protect your workers from the sun by sharing this information and resources below.

Source - Paul Williams of Creation Homes (Victoria)

Want more information?

Visit the [SunSmart website](#) to access resources you can share with your workers.

SunSmart also have a range of free posters relating to construction and skin checks which you can print or arrange delivery.

Wearing face masks at airports and on aircraft



To continue keeping WA safe, wearing a face mask is now mandatory in Western Australia, as of 15 January 2021, while:

- at an airport
- travelling on aircraft
- transporting a person subject to a quarantine direction (e.g., in a personal

vehicle, private car, hired car, ride-share vehicle or taxi)

Airports and air travel can present an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission and wearing face masks is effective in helping to prevent this.

Where a person, subject to a quarantine direction, needs to engage in transport services, all people in the vehicle (including the driver) are required to wear a face mask.

This includes private, hired, taxi and rideshare vehicles that may be used to travel from:

- the airport to their suitable premises for self-quarantine, or
- their place of self-quarantine to a COVID Clinic to present for their Day 11 COVID-19 test.

Children aged 12 years and under do not need to wear a face mask.

Penalties may apply for people who fail to comply with this requirement.

More information on face masks can be found on the [Department of Health website](#) -

https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Coronavirus/Face-masks

New Diesel workplace exposure standard

The Western Australia Government has made an important change to the workplace exposure standards for diesel particulate matter (DPM) that applies to all Western Australian mining operations.

Mine operators must now ensure DPM does not exceed 0.1 milligrams per cubic metre of air in the workplace.

DPM is a component of diesel engine exhaust which is a known health hazard for the mining industry, particularly underground mines.

While mine operators were previously encouraged to ensure DPM was kept as low as possible, compliance was voluntary.

Introducing the exposure standard follows extensive scientific research into DPM exposure risks and consultation with the mining sector.

Hence, it will be implemented immediately as industry should already have controls in place.

The announcement follows the workplace exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica halved to 0.05 milligrams per cubic metre as of October 27, 2020; and respirable coal dust was halved to 1.5 milligrams per cubic metre effective October 27, 2021.

Mines and Petroleum Minister Bill Johnston said: "The Western Australia Government is committed to safety and this new workplace exposure standard is a big win for mine workers. We will continue to work with the mining sector to ensure operators are managing risks and applying the new diesel particulate matter exposure standard. Healthy mine sites are the bedrock that underpins the Western Australia Government's goal to make Western Australia the world's safest mining environment."

Source – Australian Mining Safety Journal

New International Standard for COVID -19 Safe workplaces

A new international standard on safe working during the COVID-19 pandemic has been established to define best practice on managing safety and health during the pandemic.

ISO/PAS 45005, *Occupational health and safety management – General guidelines for safe working during the COVID-19 pandemic* has been recently released by experts from 26 countries and it is based around the latest information on work practices during COVID-19.

The standard provides practical recommendations on managing any risks arising from COVID-19 and is applicable regardless of an organization's location or status.

The new standard defines related terminology that has surfaced since the beginning of the pandemic in March, such as PPE and what defines PPE in respect of protection against COVID-19. It also provides guidance for organisations on what a COVID-19 Safe workplace should look like.

Importantly it states, that in preparation for safe operation during COVID-19, an organisation should, as a minimum:

- assess all premises, sites or parts of sites, including those that have been closed or partially operating;
- establish arrangements to prevent potentially infectious people from entering the workplace (e.g., by providing information prior to visit or posters stating the people should not enter the workplace with COVID-19 symptoms);
- perform maintenance checks and activities on equipment and systems;
- assess and control risks related to *Legionella* and other water-related diseases, in order not to introduce other health risks, particularly if water-based systems (including some types of air conditioning) have not been used for a period of time or if the use has been reduced;
- establish enhanced and/or more frequent cleaning and disinfection schedules, (e.g., by increasing the working hours and/or numbers of workers in cleaning roles, and encouraging other workers to clean and disinfect their own work zones and equipment regularly);
- provide enhanced personal hygiene facilities, including additional handwashing stations where possible and hand sanitiser points where this is not possible (including outdoor areas used for work or breaks), ensuring these facilities are accessible to workers with disabilities;
- coordinate and cooperate with other organisations on shared sites, including with contractors, managing alerts, lands and other tenants, ensuring both routine operations and emergency plans are taken into account.

The new standard also defines what action should be taken in an organisation in the event of an employee becoming infected with coronavirus.

The standard defines measures that employers and organisations should take to ensure the safety of other workers who may have come into contact with an infected worker.

It will supplement the ISO 45001 series with specific information in relation to COVID-19 best practices.

Source – Australian Mining Safety Journal



Studies show risks of work stress and sleeping pills

Two sleep studies have highlighted the prevalence of work stress-related insomnia symptoms, the risks associated with workers taking sleeping pills to fall asleep and the need for interventions that promote the safe use of these hypnotic drugs.

In the first study, of 62 nurses, researchers from the University of South Florida and a cancer centre in the US found 92 per cent of participants had sleep problems, with 68 per cent experiencing insomnia symptoms like difficulty initiating or maintaining sleep and having non-restorative sleep.

The key difference between the workers with insomnia-related concerns and low sleep quality and those without these issues was that the former reported significantly higher levels of work stress.

Sleep allows workers to recover physical and mental resources but working conditions like those experienced by the participants, like extended shifts and stressful work, make them prone to sleep problems. Although some sources of sleep concerns may not be directly intervenable (e.g., sleep schedule due to working at night), a well-designed sleep intervention may better equip nurses for sufficient and good quality sleep during the time that they do have.

The researchers say the study participants showed an "overwhelmingly high" interest in participating in workplace sleep interventions.

An online delivery method was the most preferred type of intervention, followed by group meetings at the workplace, while the preferred content included mindfulness strategies, cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia and sleep hygiene education, they found.

[My job impacts my sleep: signs and symptoms of insomnia among healthcare workers.](#) Soomi Lee, et al, US, *Industrial Health*, online first December 2020, doi: 10.2486/indhealth.2020-0291.

The dangers of hypnotics

In the second study, researchers from Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Welfare and Central Taiwan University of Science and Technology found 5.6 per cent of emergency physicians and 4.1 per cent of non-emergency physicians suffered insomnia, compared to 1.7 per cent of other people.

Their results came from an analysis of 1,097 emergency physicians, 14,112 non-emergency physicians and 4,388 people from the general population. According to the research nearly 20 per cent of physicians with insomnia used prescription drugs like benzodiazepines and non-benzodiazepines.

"Studies have found that emergency physicians or resident emergency physicians frequently experience sleep problems before and after shifts and they generally use drugs to help them fall asleep. The use of these hypnotics increases the risk of infection, cancer, depression, falls, car accidents and other incidents, as well as withdrawal-related insomnia".

Employers should consider nonpharmacological sleep interventions to curb insomnia and health promotions that instruct workers on the safe use of hypnotics.

[Risk of insomnia and hypnotics use among emergency physicians.](#) Yih-Fang liou, et al, Taiwan, *Industrial Health*, online 1 December 2020, doi: 10.2486/indhealth.2020-0217.

Complying with face mask requirements

Comcare have a four-minute micro-learn video, "Safety and prevention in a pandemic – PPE, facemasks". It provides guidance to employers and employees on when and how to wear face masks to control work-related COVID-19 risks.

Where the use of face masks at work is mandated by legislation or a risk assessment, the employer must provide face masks to workers and train them on the safe and proper use of masks. Workers must comply with that training.

It stresses that in circumstances where workplace face masks become compulsory for the pandemic, all other forces of COVID-19 protections must continue to be applied.

WHS Code for psych risks

The principles of NSW's new draft WHS Code of Practice for managing psychological risks could be applied nationally and lead to prosecutions of employers that fail to prevent mental harm, leading WHS lawyers have warned.

The draft SafeWork NSW Code of Practice, Managing the Risks to Psychological Health, is the first of its kind in Australia and will cover all NSW workplaces.

The draft Code states PCBUs must seek to eliminate work-related hazards creating psychological health risks by "designing or redesigning work, so the risk is no longer present", where reasonably practicable.

State Better Regulation Minister Kevin Anderson described it as a "practical guide" that makes it "easy for [employers] to create a mentally healthy workplace".

Examples, in the draft Code, of minimising psychological risks include increasing lighting, placing barriers between workers and customers, providing appropriate manual handling equipment, and installing sound-dampening equipment or enclosing machinery to reduce exposure to noise.

The draft Code has now completed its public comment period.

Source – OHS Alert

Health surveillance requirements for silica strengthened



- Low-dose high-resolution CT scans required for workers in engineered stone industry

- Now mandatory for workers whose health is at risk of exposure to respirable crystalline silica
- WA is the first Australian State to require these more effective scans

The McGowan Government has made an important change to the Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 that will increase protections for workers exposed to respirable crystalline silica in the engineered stone industry.

With a three-month grace period, employers will be required to provide a low-dose high-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) scan, supervised by an appointed medical practitioner, instead of the previously required chest X-ray. HRCT scans are superior to chest X-rays and will assist in the early detection of silicosis.

This makes Western Australia the first state in Australia to require a low-dose high-resolution computed tomography (HRCT) scan to better protect workers exposed to silica.

Silicosis is a serious and potentially lethal occupational lung disease caused by exposure to respirable crystalline silica in industries such as engineered stone product manufacturing, installation, stonemasonry and construction work.

The amendment will assist in the early detection of silicosis and follows the McGowan Government's recent decision to halve the workplace exposure standard for respirable crystalline silica to further protect workers.

Workplace dust and emission rules tightened in Victoria

Employers will be required to prepare a "silica hazard control statement" and obtain a special licence under proposed Victorian regulations affecting four sectors and 24 sub-industries.

The proposed Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Amendment (Crystalline Silica) Regulations 2021 and an associated 75-page regulatory impact statement are open for public comment until 18 February.

The new Regulations will replace the 2019 Regulations of the same name (see related article), retaining the prohibition on dry cutting engineered stone and prescribing new control measures for a wide range of other materials containing silicosis-causing crystalline silica, including sand, bricks, granite, ceramic tiles and concrete.

Manufacturers and importing suppliers of crystalline silica-containing products will be required to provide up-to-date and accurate written information on the proportion of silica contained in a product before it is supplied to a workplace.

Employers and self-employed persons engaged in "high risk silica work" (tasks resulting in airborne concentrations of respirable crystalline silica exceeding half the relevant exposure standard) will be required to: prepare a silica hazard control statement; provide information on the potential health risks of silica exposure to job applicants and employees; undertake atmospheric monitoring; and implement transitional measures to allow their workplaces to adjust to the new requirements.

The new licensing regime – flagged early last year (see related article) – will apply to employers and self-employed persons who cut, grind, abrasively polish or undertake any other activities that generate crystalline silica dust from engineered stone, which has an extremely high crystalline silica content of up to 95 per cent, compared to between two and 40 per cent for marble, granite and concrete.

These duty holders will be required to apply for an engineered stone licence under a process that involves, among other things, detailing: the risk control measures intended to be put in place to eliminate or reduce any health and safety risks; and the respiratory protective equipment that will be provided to workers who undertake engineered stone processes.

The regime will be complemented by rules restricting the supply of engineered stone to licence holders.

The proposed Regulations will cover the stonemason, construction, mining and manufacturing sectors, and 24 sub-industries within these sectors identified by WorkSafe Victoria, including bricklayers, carpenters, cement manufacturers, concreters, plasterers and tilers.

Source – OHS Alert

Nine inflammatory foods to avoid



When struggling with chronic pain, such as arthritis, it's important to be mindful of your diet and how the foods you eat could be affecting your pain and inflammation.

The following nine (9) foods are known to increase the body's inflammatory response:

- Sugar
- Saturated fats
- Trans fats (processed foods)
- Omega 6 fatty acids (such as corn and peanut oils)
- Refined carbohydrates
- Mono sodium gluconate (MSG)
- Gluten
- Aspartame (artificial sweetener)
- Alcohol

If you're suffering from chronic pain and inflammation, try reducing or cutting out these nine (9) foods from your diet, while increasing the amount of fresh fruits, vegetables, and omega-3s you're consuming, and you may find some relief. A chiropractic adjustment may also be able to help with your pain. Give us a call to book an appointment.

Source - Chelsea Chiropractic – Nedlands

Workplace lung risks posed by disinfectants



A timely study, given the need to deep clean workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic, has re-emphasised the strong link between occupational disinfectant use and developing asthma.

In the first study, of more than 17,000 nurses from the US and Canada, researchers found that using high-level disinfectants to disinfect workplace devices, supplies or medical instruments significantly increases the likelihood of developing asthma.

They say their study is unique because it was conducted among early-to-mid-career nurses and avoids the healthy-worker effect of other studies that have yielded inconsistent results.

The findings add further evidence on the link between occupational exposure to disinfectants and cleaning products and asthma incidence, the researchers from Inserm's integrative respiratory epidemiology research team in France and the Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health and other US institutions say.

The results highlight the need for asthma prevention strategies that complement infection control in healthcare organisations.

The researchers found there was only limited use of ventilation systems or respiratory protection (apart from surgical masks) among the participants while they handled disinfectants.

They say this prevented them from evaluating the impact of such protections on the association between disinfectant use and asthma.

Occupational use of high-level disinfectants and asthma incidence in early- to mid-career female nurses: a prospective cohort study. Oriane Dumas, et al, France and the US, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, online first January 2010, doi: 10.1136/oemed-2020-106793.

Source – OHS Alert

Epsom salt baths to soothe body and mind



There are few things more relaxing than a warm bath at the end of a long day. But did you know that adding Epsom salts to your bath might just make it even better?

Many athletes and trainers swear by the recovery benefits of Epsom salts. It is believed that an Epsom salt bath can reduce muscle soreness and ease inflammation.

Epsom salt contains magnesium, an essential mineral. It is thought that soaking in a magnesium-rich Epsom salt bath may provide pain relief, have detoxification benefits, and help you relax for more restful sleep.

Ultimately, it's an easy way to add an extra level of relaxation to your self-care routine that may just ease those aches and pains.

Source - Chelsea Chiropractic – Nedlands

COVID-19 related workers' compensation claims

As at 31 July 2020

As at 31 July 2020

Safe Work Australia has collected preliminary data on COVID-19 related workers' compensation claims.

533

workers' compensation claims have been lodged across Australia

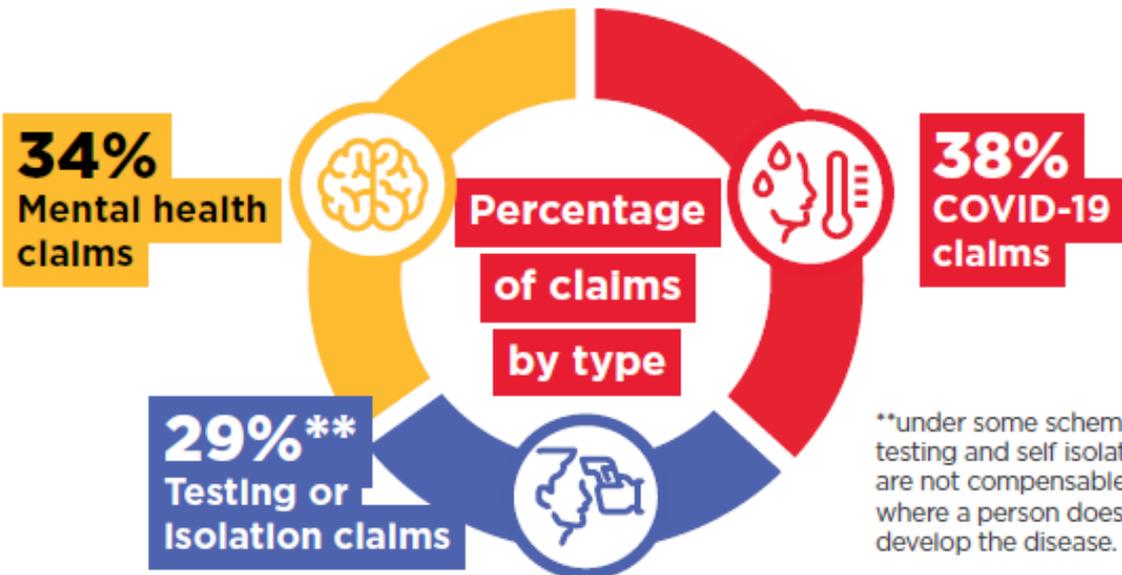
of these: **253** claims were accepted

95 claims were rejected*

185 claims were pending

*Rejected claims may include a range of scenarios, including where a worker was tested for COVID-19 but found to be negative, or where there was evidence the disease was not contracted at work.

Of the claims lodged as at 31 July



Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)



Membership of the Society is open to all those interested in occupational health and safety.

\$100 Corporate membership

\$50 ordinary membership

\$20 student membership.

Simply email

ohswa@outlook.com.au

with your details.

Incorporated in 1978, the Occupational Health Society of

Australia (WA Branch) is a non-profit association which provides a forum for the wide range of disciplines engaged in the occupational health profession in Western Australia.

The aims of the Society are:

- to develop effective occupational health practice within Western Australia
- to encourage awareness by individuals, organisations and other bodies, of the role of occupational health
- to provide a forum for professional contact between persons interested in, and working in, occupational health
- to express an independent, professional viewpoint on all aspects of occupational health considered desirable in the public interest
- to seek the improvement or an extension of the existing legislation for the promotion of safety and health at work
- in order to ensure uniform principles are applied in all occupational activities.

Please contact the Secretariat on ohswa@outlook.com.au regarding membership matters.

Occupational Health Society of Australia (WA)

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