

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Vol.3, 2009

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

### Planning and Local Focus: The Key to Success



Well structured safety systems are like software products. Most line managers have and use them to some extent but few understand their full functionality and therefore use their capability to get the best out of them.

To add insult to injury, safety objectives and targets are then imposed upon these managers without consultation or regard for what is achievable. This is often what head office managements' impose. This makes the process remote, unfriendly, and invariably not as relevant.

If organisations liberate themselves from this bureaucracy however the process becomes more personal, challenging and empowering. It also delivers results.

Planning, at business unit level is a simple and essential activity that safety professionals should use to help managers increase their understanding and confidence in what is achievable. If they are then given the chance to propose their own targets and plan, based upon their own risk profile they are likely to be appropriately motivated.

Once this openness is achieved the safety professional becomes an ally rather than a nagging outsider. This sets up the environment wherein safety can become a part of the integrated work process.

The key precursors to successful facilitation of the planning process will include:

- Researching and using injury occurrence data specific to that workgroup;
- Reviewing the state of hazard and risk management within that workgroup, by review of work areas and activities and of risk registers and risk assessments;
- Review of the status of systems

implementation for the workgroup;

- Speaking with each of the key stakeholders to understand their knowledge understanding and priorities; and
- Understand the workgroups organisational context.

We advocate planning workshops that bring the stakeholders together for the purpose of discussing wants, needs and relative priorities, within a structure that reflects their risk profile. Within this structure keep it simple to get management buy-in (WIFM's) and target no more than 5 priority action areas, each with specific, measurable milestones and responsibilities

Risk Strategies provides value adding support in understanding the processes and guiding implementation.

For further information email me at [peter.bishop@riskstrategies.com.au](mailto:peter.bishop@riskstrategies.com.au) or visit [www.riskstrategies.com.au](http://www.riskstrategies.com.au).



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**Rehabilitation Management Systems: The key to continuous improvement**

The general aim of workers' compensation schemes in each jurisdiction is to return injured workers to work in a timely, safe and durable manner. To ensure that this happens, an effective Rehabilitation Management System (RMS) should be developed to provide a framework within which an employer can meet their legal responsibilities. Adoption of a systems-based approach to injury management and return to work provides a platform for employers to ensure effective injury prevention, early intervention, rehabilitation and return to work. Ideally a RMS should be integrated into the broader workplace risk management systems and should be measured and managed like any other activity in your organisation.

The effectiveness of a workplace RMS is best maintained through an ongoing program that not only includes commitment, planning and implementation, but also a measurement and evaluation component. Measuring and evaluating the RMS performance internally will focus on areas that need modification to continually improve the system.

One aspect that distinguishes an organisation that 'actively pursues continuous improvement' from one that does not is the existence of a planned approach to improving

(in contrast to an ad hoc approach). In an ad hoc approach, improvements are often only made in response to problems, that is, when something goes wrong. This does **not** represent actively pursuing continuous improvement.

A RMS will provide those involved in the process with clear guidance on expectations, roles and



responsibilities. An effective RMS should also have clearly articulated injury management objectives and targets aimed at enabling the organisation to evaluate its injury management performance at the strategic level.

The identification of key performance indicators (KPIs) for a RMS provides a basis for methodically monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the system. It also helps identify activities that need corrective action and improvement.

Annual audits provide an excellent tool to determine whether the system has been properly implemented and maintained and whether the organisation has met the performance. Additionally, audits help an organization to ensure compliance with their legislative obligations as well as providing an opportunity for performance improvement. Prompt corrective action should be taken to rectify any identified deficiencies. A regular audit program promotes a continuous improvement strategy.

Risk Strategies are suitably qualified and experienced to help your organization with developing and implementing effective Rehabilitation Management Systems and measuring the continuous improvement.

For further information, contact Risk Strategies on 03 98638401 or at [riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au](mailto:riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au).

**How's the serenity: Use of meditation in reducing occupational stress**

Meditation has been identified as being twice as effective as traditional stress management tools, and increases worker productivity, according to new Australian research.

According to Dr Ramesh Manocha of Sydney's Royal Hospital for Women, workers only need to participate in two 10-minute meditation sessions a day to see health improvements.

In his study, Manocha looked at full-time

white-collar workers from the Sydney CBD and measured their anxiety, depression and work-related stress using psychometric questionnaires. The workers were engaged in meditation twice a week after work. The findings indicate that after eight weeks of "mental silence" meditation training (based on sahaja yoga), workers reported a 26 per cent improvement in occupational stress, while workers on a non-mental silence relaxation program had a 13 per cent improvement.

A handful of professional firms already offer workplace programs, Manocha says, revealing that one of Australia's top three law firms, at least one of the big-four banks and doctors have been using meditation successfully for several years.

For further information on effective management of stress in the workplace, contact Risk Strategies on 03 98638401 or [riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au](mailto:riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au).



## OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

### New South Wales to Restore Union Right of Entry

NSW Minister for Finance Joe Tripodi introduced the Occupational Health and Safety (Authorised Representatives) Bill 2009 to parliament last week to clarify the definition of an "authorised representative".

The change was prompted by a recent Federal Court (John Holland Pty Ltd v Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (New South Wales Branch) [2009] FCA 645 (19 June 2009)) case, which held that union representatives must be "officers" to exercise right of entry under the NSW OHS Act.

Tripodi said the decision "threw into doubt many years of custom and practice in New South Wales where union employees, even if not elected as officers of a union" were authorised under OHS laws to have a right of entry to workplaces.



"The amendments contained in the bill will restore the definition to the previously accepted position," Tripodi said.

### Unchanged Safe Work Australia Bill Passes Through Parliament

Further to the articles in Q4, 2008 and Q1, 2009 Risk Strategies; newsletters, an unchanged Safe Work Australia Bill was passed through Parliament on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September, enabling the statutory authority to replace the ASCC.

The passage of the Bill was made possible after the Federal Opposition withdrew its challenge.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard had introduced the Bill to Parliament three times, refusing to incorporate the opposition's proposed amendments.

### Towards Harmonisation

In late September, Safe Work Australia will be releasing the draft model occupational health and safety (OHS) legislation for public comment.

The suite of documents available for public comment includes a model Act, discussion paper, administrative Regulations and the consultation Regulation Impact Statement.

The new model OHS legislation will impact all Australian workplaces. You are encouraged to provide your feedback to ensure the model OHS legislation is relevant and applicable to all Australian industry representatives, employers and employees.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) has supported the move towards harmonisation of the OHS laws by hitting out at the ACTU's campaign against OHS harmonisation, labelling it imbalanced in favour of punitive and pro-union rules.

It said the motive behind the union's campaign was a push for laws to allow union officials the right to prosecute for OHS breaches - a law that makes an employer guilty of OHS breaches unless they can prove their innocence, it said.

The ACTU staged a rally earlier this month and has launched a radio commercial as part of its campaign against the Federal Government's planned harmonisation of OHS laws.



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## Office Safety: Simple ideas, great results

In an office based environment we often don't realize that bad habits have developed. Most would have an appropriate work station that has been adjusted to meet personal requirements, which is periodically checked as part of the employers risk management processes. However it might be that you have been so busy lately you haven't had a chance to stop and take a fresh look at your workspace, or you feel so tied to your desk you don't take necessary breaks. There are a number of simple things that you can do to minimize the risk of injury during a work day in the office.

**Be organized!** Have a look at your desk and make sure that it is clutter free and that the things that you need to use regularly are within easy reach. Decide what tools and equipment are essential to your work in order to function efficiently every day. What you use on a daily basis should be placed within arm's reach on the desk so that you do not have to bend, stand, or swivel in your chair to reach these. Items of equipment that are not used so often can be stored in an area that is not as easy to access, like a shelf, however make sure that they are not in a high reach zone, where excessive force may be required to lift them down.

**Think about your posture!** Although your own work habits can contribute to back and shoulder pain, using good posture is not a simple matter of finding the "right" position in which to sit. Even "poor" postures (feet up on chair rungs, slumping, twisting your body into odd positions) can prove comfortable if you don't remain in them for extended periods of time. In fact, shifting about periodically actually proves useful for many people.

The following changes to your behaviour and work environment should avoid back, neck, and shoulder pain:



- Change your body position periodically throughout the day.
- Use a document stand to reduce the amount of neck twisting or bending forward if typing from a source document.
- Position your keyboard directly in front of you and at approximately elbow height. This should enable you to type with straight wrists.
- Centre your monitor with your keyboard and chair.
- Avoid ear-to-shoulder neck positioning while on the phone.
- Rearrange the work area to avoid excess bending, stooping, and reaching.
- Try to relax. Many injuries and painful episodes arise from continuously tensing your neck and shoulder muscles while working.

**Stop, get up and move!** Getting up and walking around is the best exercise you can get to provide a break from sitting, concentrating and using the muscles of the arms and hands. About every 20 to 30

minutes is a guide to how often it is helpful to move around. Even getting up for 20 to 30 seconds to pick up papers from the photocopier or get some water is a way to change your posture and give muscles a chance to recover.

There are some excellent reference documents regarding this subject that can easily be accessed on the occupational health and safety authority website of most jurisdictions.

For further information about office ergonomics or an assessment of your workplace, contact Risk Strategies on **98638401** or at [riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au](mailto:riskstrategies@riskstrategies.com.au)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### SAFE WORK AUSTRALIA

#### Safe Work Australia Week

26-30 October 2009

For more information visit

[www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

### QUEENSLAND

#### Queensland Work Safe and Return to Work Expo

27 October 2009

For more information visit

[www.loveyourworkexpo.com.au](http://www.loveyourworkexpo.com.au)

### COMCARE

#### Comcare National Conference

23-25 September 2009

For more information visit

[www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)



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