

Australian and New Zealand workplace safety authorities set priorities

Australian and New Zealand workplace safety authorities, meeting as the Heads of Workplace Safety Authorities (HWSA), met in Perth last week (March 8) to discuss current national campaigns and set priorities for the year ahead.

HWSA brings together senior executive officers from the Commonwealth, state and territory and New Zealand workplace safety authorities to progress the national agenda for improvement and harmonisation of occupational health and safety.

HWSA Chair, John Watson, said the three national campaigns currently being implemented were in full swing.

“The Large Mobile Plant in Civil Construction campaign, which aims to improve the safety of people working around large moving plant, is currently in the middle of a two-month workplace visit phase,” Mr Watson said.

“Inspectors are currently visiting over 600 construction sites around the country to assess the level of safety for workers and pedestrians on civil construction sites,” Mr Watson said.

“Meanwhile the Manual Handling in Manufacturing campaign is focusing on the reduction of injuries resulting from heavy lifting, repetitive tasks and sustained awkward posture.

“This project involves telephone surveys of employers followed by educational workshops providing practical guidance to prevent manual handling injuries focusing on issues identified during the surveys.

“The Labour Hire in the Food Industry national campaign has been focusing on developing nationally consistent guidance material to assist labour hire agencies and host employers management the safety of on-hired workers.

“Information sessions are currently being held to improve workplace safety for on-hired workers in the food manufacturing industry.”

Also at the Perth meeting, HWSA agreed on three new campaigns to be pursued in the coming financial year, namely:

- Prevention of falls in construction – implementation of a code of practice;
- Manual Handling and slips/trips/falls in hospitals; and
- Guarded machinery in manufacturing.

Planning for these campaigns is currently underway.

Mr Watson said the meeting also discussed the ramifications of new Commonwealth occupational health and safety regulations and the harmonisation work currently being undertaken to prepare for the implementation of national standards for the licensing of high-risk work.

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