



Media Release - SafeWork SA

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\$22k FINE AFTER FORKLIFT INJURY

A Riverland fruit-packing firm has been fined \$22,000 over a series of safety failures which led to a woman being permanently disabled after a forklift ran over her foot and crushed it.

BP Fruits Pty Ltd received its penalty today in the SA Industrial Relations Court after earlier pleading guilty to one count of breaching section 19(1) of *Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986*, in failing to ensure that an employee was safe from injury and risks to health.

The incident occurred at the company's Loxton packing shed in August 2005, as the woman attempted to cross the shed.

SafeWork SA's investigation found that:

- walkways for pedestrians were not adequately marked
- staff members were not properly instructed in relation to the risks
- the relevant safety induction training was inadequate
- the operator of the forklift was not accredited to operate the vehicle
- the operator was not under supervision at the time of the incident.

Industrial Magistrate Richard Hardy acknowledged the Victim Impact Statement and medical reports, which indicated the woman was left with permanent residual disability of 25% of her lower leg.

"It has clearly had an ongoing effect on her life and her relationships..."

"The level of risk posed was in my view somewhat higher and more serious than indicated by the injuries sustained by (the woman); in other words a more serious injury was quite foreseeable."

While the firm fully cooperated with authorities and has greatly improved its safety procedures since the incident, SafeWork SA warns that forklifts are a constant source of danger in workplaces.

"Even now, any forklift operator in South Australia must be assessed as competent by a properly qualified assessor," says SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson.

"Next year however, this arrangement will be further strengthened by the introduction of a national licensing standard which will require all forklift operators in SA to be licensed by SafeWork SA from 1 July.

"We sincerely hope that these rigorous standards on the operation of forklifts will prevent any further incidents of this kind as much as possible," Ms. Patterson says.