



# News Release - SafeWork SA

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## **\$20,000 FINE FOR S.E. TIMBER MILL INJURY**

**Safety guards for old or little-used machines, and proper training in their use are a must in every workplace, says SafeWork SA.**

The agency issued the warning after the SA Industrial Relations Court fined a Mt. Gambier timber firm \$20,000 over a serious hand injury suffered by a worker two years ago.

**Whiteheads Timber Sales Pty Ltd** had pleaded guilty to breaching Section 19 of the *Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986*, in failing to ensure that an employee was safe from injury and risks to health, while at work.

The prosecution by SafeWork SA arose from an incident in February 2005 in which a female worker lost part of her left index finger while working with a bandsaw.

The court heard the incident happened within 90 minutes of the worker commencing duties on the machine with a colleague.

In his decision yesterday, Industrial Magistrate Stephen Lieschke found several shortcomings:

- A failure to adequately guard the blade;
- A failure to adequately guard the drive belts and pulleys;
- A failure to provide reasonably necessary instruction, training and supervision.

Despite three pages of safe operating instructions being attached to one side of the machine, the court also heard that proper guarding was given a low priority because the machine was used only occasionally.

Magistrate Lieschke said that this indicated a failure to understand or accept occupational health and safety responsibilities.

*“...the law requires a structured approach to thorough training, instruction and supervision, in addition to taking a considered and structured approach to hazard elimination.”*

SafeWork SA Executive Director, Michele Patterson said there can never be low priorities with workplace safety.

“If a piece of plant or equipment has the potential to kill or injure no matter how infrequently it’s used, it must be managed accordingly in terms of guarding and safety training for employees.”

An Adelaide firm was fined \$12,000 in similar circumstances last month, after a worker had his right index finger crushed in an old machine for which there was no adequate guarding nor even written instructions on its operation.