



Government
of South Australia

SafeWork SA

Musculoskeletal Disorders in Transport - Proactive Compliance Project 2021 Project Closure Report

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Executive Summary

The Road Transport Industry is identified as a national priority to reduce the high rate of fatalities and serious claims in the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022*.

Muscular Stress accounted for the highest proportion of serious claims (18 per cent), followed by muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down an object (15 per cent), and falls on the same level (13 per cent).

SafeWork SA's Wholesale Transport & Retail Team developed and conducted a Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) in Transport Proactive Campaign targeting 25 Road Transport Companies.

During the MSD Campaign, a total of 53 worksite visits were conducted resulting in 7 Improvement Notices being issued. The low number of statutory notices issued was one of the positive indications that the Industry appears to have mature safety systems in place which are addressing manual handling risks within the transport sector.

It is recommended that given the low level of enforcement notices issued to the PCBU's audited in this campaign; SafeWork SA monitor injury rates across this cohort to measure industry level improvements.

Introduction

The Road Transport industry is identified as a national priority to reduce the high rate of fatalities and serious claims in the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022*.

The industry includes two detailed sub-industries: road freight transport; and road passenger transport.

One of the key WHS issues and segments of the industry where performance may be lagging was identified as being 'Muscular Stress While Handling Objects'.

Muscular Stress accounted for the highest proportion of serious claims (18 per cent), followed by muscular stress while lifting, carrying or putting down an object (15 per cent), and falls on the same level (13 per cent).

SafeWork SA regulates compliance with the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* (SA) and can require Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to rectify safety breaches through the issuing of Statutory Notices or prosecution.

Background

As result of this National Safety Strategy, the SafeWork SA Wholesale Transport & Retail Team developed and undertook a Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) in Transport audit program targeting 25 selected Road Transport companies within South Australia.

Scope

The MSD in Transport audit targeted 25 selected Road Transport companies within South Australia who had Return to Work SA lost time injury data greater than one week over the 2016 to 2019 period.

The proactive campaign was run by several WHS Inspectors in the Wholesale Transport & Retail Team from January 2021 until April 2021.

Industry Audits

The targeted industry group mainly consisted of 25 medium to large road transport PCBU's and the majority of these were involved in general freight movement both intrastate and interstate.

During the campaign, SafeWork SA visited a number of road freight transport depots, auditing safety control measures in place to protect workers from musculoskeletal disorders including the training and safe use of correct manual handling techniques and how these risks are assessed.

The targeted group, in general, had mature safety systems which covered the handling of freight and the identification of hazardous manual task. These system included training and safe lifting requirements for workers.

It's worth noting that during the audit process, the South Australian transport industry was influenced by Covid-19; therefore increasing the timeframe to complete the audit program by SafeWork SA.

Statutory Notices

During the Campaign, a total of 53 worksite visits were conducted and 7 Improvement Notices were issued. The low number of statutory notices issued was one of the positive indications that the Sector appears to have mature safety systems in place which are addressing manual handling and the potential for injuries.

- Of the 7 Improvement Notices issued, 4 of these related to the PCBU not providing suitable information and training to workers on hazardous manual tasks while the remaining 3 notices related to general workplace safety issues such as fire extinguishers and unrestrained gas cylinders.

Trends

The only trend noted as a result of the proactive campaign was 4 of the PCBU's who had not provided information and training to their workers in relation to hazardous manual tasks. This has now been rectified by the issuing, and compliance, with statutory notices.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- given the low level of enforcement notices issued to the PCBUs audited in this campaign; SafeWork SA monitor injury rates across this cohort to measure industry level improvements.
- communication of the outcome of the compliance campaign is provided to internal and external stakeholders

Further information

Businesses requiring further information and advice can telephone SafeWork SA on 1300 365 255 or visit the SafeWork SA website at safework.sa.gov.au.

Workplaces can request a visit from the SafeWork SA advisory service who can provide practical advice based on a workplace's industry, size, risk, and complexity.

SafeWork SA advisors can help with understanding work health and safety responsibilities, and provide practical support to improve systems, practices, and safety generally.