

Apprentices, fall prevention key focus for Construction Safety Action Plan

Initiatives to protect apprentices working on South Australian construction sites will be a key focus of an industry action plan developed by the state's work health and safety regulator as part of a push to improve health and safety within the sector.

To coincide with National Tradies Health Month, SafeWork SA has released its Construction Action Plan, which highlights ten priority areas to improve workplace health and safety over the next two years.

Acting Executive Director of SafeWork SA, Dini Soulio, said that, on average, work injury claims in the sector between 2013 and 2016 have cost \$29 million a year.

Over 90 per cent of injuries in construction during this period were joint/ligament and muscular trauma; wounds, amputation and internal organ damage; musculoskeletal; fractures; and mental disorders, with common injury causes being body stressing; being hit by moving objects; slips, trips and falls; and mental stress.

The plan seeks to partner with industry and unions to support employers and workers, in particular those in the small business sector, to develop practical work processes and systems that provide a safe working environment for all construction workers, especially apprentices.

"Construction is a high-risk industry so it is important that government and the industry come together to focus on practical solutions to the key health and safety issues facing this vital part of our economy," Mr Soulio said.

"Focussing on initiatives that promote work health and safety awareness, especially for apprentices will not only help improve safety amongst those just starting out in the industry – it will also help build a new level of safety awareness in the next generation of construction workers.

"This action plan highlights ten key areas where we can work together to educate and support employers and workers to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of everyone in the industry."

As part of SafeWork SA's focus on preventative education, initiatives focus on key risk factors and issues facing the construction industry, including:

- A fall prevention campaign to improve awareness of the risks and practical control measures
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing programs to address workplace stress, fatigue, the effects of drug and alcohol and other lifestyle factors
- The development of educational material covering asbestos, working in hot conditions and how to avoid utility strikes
- Partnering with government agencies and industry stakeholders – including both business and workers' representative bodies - to incorporate safety into the concept, tendering and procuring stages of a construction project
- Collaboration with industry to find solutions to the risks associated with elevating work platforms and people working around mobile plant
- Building leadership capacity in middle management that encourages a positive safety culture.

The Chair of the Construction Industry Safety Committee SA, Chris Ginever, welcomed the development of the plan.

“The proactive approach by SafeWork SA to partner with the construction industry is the best strategy to find workable solutions to the high-risk activities workers are exposed to on a daily basis,” he said.

“The construction environment is rapidly evolving, which is why it is so important that SafeWork and industry work together to support a workplace culture that recognises the importance of safe working environments and eliminate or minimise any risks to the health and safety of our workers.”

The plan can be found at https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/show_page.jsp?id=116498