

# Safety Chat



HAZCON

ISSUE 3 - October 2011

## Hot Weather Approaching: Are you protecting your workers, or do they sizzle in the sun?

It is a very unfortunate fact that Australia has one of the highest incidence rates of skin cancer in the world, with more than 380,000 people treated for the disease every year. At least one out of every two Australians will require treatment in their lifetime for various forms of skin cancer, such as basal cell carcinoma and melanoma.

The workplace is a major source of solar UV radiation (UVR) exposure for many adult Australians and outdoor workers who are required to spend long periods of time working in the sun. These workers have a higher than average risk of skin cancer.

Although the promise of hot weather sounds alluring, employers need to be considering control measures to either eliminate or minimise the likelihood of skin cancer and heat related illness due to exposure to solar radiation.

Heat related illness can include:

- Life Threatening Heat Stroke;
- Heat Exhaustion;
- Heat Cramps;
- Fainting;
- Rashes (or Prickly Heat); and;
- Heat Fatigue.

Heat related illness can also lead to the worsening of pre-existing illnesses and conditions.



HAZCON has designed a short training package that can run from 1 to 2 hours on this topic. It is a hard hitting and graphic look at the consequences of not protecting against heat related illness due to UVR exposure. It can also be used in conjunction with any of the other OHS training packages that we provide.

HAZCON can assist in producing policy and procedures to manage workplace exposure to solar UVR and management of heat related illness as well as conducting measurements of the thermal stress potential in workplaces. To discuss any of these issues please contact one of our experienced Health, Safety & Environmental Consultants on 1800 429 266, or by email at [hazcon@hazcon.com.au](mailto:hazcon@hazcon.com.au).

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## Twenty Five Percent of Employees are Uncomfortable at Work!

Indoor Air Quality (IAQ), heating and cooling and indoor contaminants, such as mould and fungi, are common factors that make workplaces uncomfortable; yet these factors can be measured effectively.



An initial assessment of the workplace can be conducted, using a checklist based on WorkSafe and Australian Standard guidelines. The initial assessment also measures the levels of oxygen, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, temperature, humidity, air flow and lighting. When applicable, additional measurements can be taken of potential contaminants, such as Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) or dust.

Where mould has been identified as being of concern, especially after floods or water egress, the level of indoor airborne mould and bacteria can be measured. This is then compared to the level measured outside to give an indication of the need for remediation. The reports issued will detail parameters measured against expected standards and applicable remedial actions required.

If you would like to discuss the Indoor Air Quality at your workplace please contact Deb Wilson on 1800 429 266.

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## State Government throwing a Spanner in the Works? We know what is coming, but we don't know when!



The Victorian Government has called on the Commonwealth to defer for 12 months, the implementation of National OHS Harmonisation laws. In a recent media release, the Assistant Treasurer, the Hon Gordon Rich-Phillips, stated “the Commonwealth had not provided the information needed to assess fully the impacts of the national laws on Victoria and details of the package were still not finalised, despite the proposed 1st January 2012 commencement date. The Victorian Government supports the principle of OHS harmonisation; however we need to ensure that the proposed package is in Victoria’s interests”.

The Victorian Government has now started work on a supplementary independent Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) to assess the impact of the proposed laws on Victoria. This is expected to take several months. The Victorian Government has also stated that the 12 month delay will allow for outstanding issues to be addressed and provide businesses with a greater opportunity for preparation.

In the meantime, WorkSafe will continue to enforce Victoria’s existing OHS Legislation and Compliance Codes.

The proposed Work Health and Safety (WHS) Legislation comprises a model WHS Act and Regulations to be supported by National Codes of Practice. The new WHS laws will apply to all States, Territories and the Commonwealth. In Victoria they would replace the existing OHS Act 2004, OHS Regulations 2007 and Compliance Codes.

The model WHS Act, Regulations and National Codes of Practice can be viewed on the Safe Work Australia Website [www.safeworkaustralia.com.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.com.au).

## VOCs and Odours create Workplace Concerns



Volatile Organic Chemicals (VOCs) are prevalent throughout workplaces in various types and amounts. They are emitted by paints, glues, cleaning agents, pesticides and herbicides; just to name a few sources.

Many of these VOCs emit strong odours and their presence causes concerns to personnel who may be exposed to potentially hazardous levels of chemicals. These concerns need to be taken seriously. One of the ways to confirm whether the atmosphere is safe is to conduct chemical monitoring in conjunction with site assessments.

Chemical monitoring is conducted for the persons who are likely to be exposed to the VOC or airborne contaminant. The monitoring is conducted over a period of time. This is generally determined by the work that is done and the type of chemical that is suspected to be present.

The VOCs are captured in a special filter, fitted to a pump that is located in the person’s breathing zone. The filter is then analysed for the type and concentration of the VOC in the air. The information is then used by a hygienist to determine whether the person is being exposed to hazardous levels of VOCs.

Other investigation techniques can be used to determine the concentration of VOCs in the air. This is especially important where VOCs are potentially flammable and have the potential to create a fire or explosion.

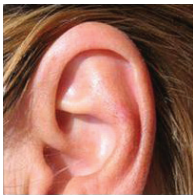
The information from chemical monitoring can then be used in the development of a well informed risk assessment.

If you would like further information on chemicals, airborne contaminants or monitoring, please contact Ian Good on 1800 429 266.





## Hearing Loss: World's Biggest Preventable Workplace Disease



Occupational Noise Induced Hearing Loss (ONIHL) has been identified as the most significant preventable occupational disease in the world today.

In Australia, between July 2002 and June 2007, there were about 16,500 successful worker's compensation claims for industrial deafness involving permanent impairment due to noise exposure. In the US, where researchers surveyed 5,000 people, the rate of impairment jumped 150 percent between 1965 and 1994 among those in their 50s.

Most people lose their hearing slowly, over a 15 to 20 year period, because regular and repeated noise exposure damages the hair cells of the inner ear that interpret sound vibrations as words, music or other sounds. As the working environment now has larger machinery, longer hours and personal entertainment devices (such as iPods), the incidence rate of ONIHL has increased.

The research literature identifies several factors that stop effective noise controls being adopted in the workplace. These so-called barriers to effective noise control and ONIHL prevention include a belief that the term 'hearing conservation program' refers only to personal hearing protection devices (HPDs) and audiometric testing.

In addition, the gradual occurrence of hearing loss tends to reduce its priority as a work health and safety issue. Other important barriers identified in literature include the view that noise control is expensive and difficult; that HPDs are uncomfortable and interfere with warning signals, the individual not wanting to acknowledge having a hearing loss and the lack of management commitment to Occupational Health & Safety.



HAZCON has developed an integrated noise management program which involved extensive dosimetry and sound surveys in the workplaces; which is supported by specific noise programs to look at appropriate control strategies. We can also measure the effectiveness of existing HPDs and use the testing process to improve the use of HPDs

within the workplace. To discuss your noise management program, please contact Peter Attwood on 1800 429 266.

## HAZCON and the University of Ballarat (VIOSH) Strengthen their Relationship

HAZCON and the University of Ballarat (VIOSH) are pleased to announce a relationship for the delivery of quality OH&S training. The joint programs have ranged from sessions on post graduate studies to co-facilitation of HSR training.

## Visible Safety in Construction: Is it light enough?



Large construction projects can run for 24 hours a day and a key requirement is the provision of suitable night lighting for outside works, as well as inside the structures. Once the structures become enclosed, the natural illumination that daylight provides is lost and additional task lighting has to be provided.

For some remote construction works, this task lighting is powered by portable generators. In addition, access and egress lighting is powered by the same source.

Risk assessments should be reviewed as the construction program progresses to consider the new "what if" scenarios, especially where there is a reliance on portable power to provide a safely lit workplace. In this case, the employer or contractor must also ensure there is adequate emergency lighting to allow for safe egress from the work areas if there is a failure in the system.

The work area will also change as tasks are completed so the provision of suitable task and emergency lighting will have to be reviewed and verified constantly. There are test regimes that can be used to ensure that all lighting, whether it is task lighting, access, egress or emergency lighting, is sufficient to protect the workers on the site.

AS/NZS 3012:2010—Electrical Installations—Construction and Demolition Sites provides guidance as to what constitutes adequate lighting for all work environments.

If you require any further information about workplace lighting or wish to undertake a lighting assessment, please contact Ian Good on 1800 429 266.

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## Meet HAZCON's Melbourne Office Manager



HAZCON Pty Ltd would like to introduce Maree Martin, Office Manager of HAZCON's Melbourne facility, located at 8 Industrial Avenue, Notting Hill.

Maree comes to HAZCON with a Diploma in Business Management and a vast experience in office management and implementing workplace policies and procedures. She is a welcome addition to the HAZCON team.

## Do You Have Asbestos in Your Home or Workplace?



NATA Accreditation  
Number 13234

HAZCON has a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) Accredited Laboratory for asbestos air monitoring and sample identification services. Our NATA accredited asbestos laboratory facilities have been developed to provide a quality asbestos air monitoring and identification service using our own personnel.

If you would like to have materials tested for asbestos then simply place a sample in two sealed 'zip lock' bags and bring it to either of our Melbourne or Gippsland offices, which are open from 8.30am–5pm Monday to Friday.

Alternatively, you can post your sealed sample, along with your name, address, phone number and sample location to 107 Princes Highway, Trafalgar, 3824.

If you have any concerns about asbestos or would like to discuss sampling of asbestos, please contact one of our experienced Occupational Hygienists on 1800 429 266.



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## HAZCON Training Australia Wide



After a review of our training, HAZCON has changed from VRQA to the ASQA standard. The advantages of this change is to ensure:

HAZCON can legally provide accredited training throughout Australia;  
HAZCON can maintain the quality of the training to national standards; and  
HAZCON will have the ability to extend the scope of the accredited training offered.

This also provides HAZCON with the opportunity to run training across all states and territories, Australia wide.

If your company has any training requirements please contact a member of our Training team on 1800 429 266 or visit our website, [www.hazcon.com.au](http://www.hazcon.com.au), for further information.

## Bullying and Harassment



The so called "Brodie's Law", the Crimes Amendment (Bullying) Bill 2011, has been passed. The ramifications of this are still to be considered however employers should review their bullying and harassment policies.

Employers should provide sessions on what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour within the workplace. This can be done via presentations at staff and workgroup meetings; with the presentations looking at the procedures for dealing with complaints and formally providing feedback on appropriate behaviour.

HAZCON can tailor a Bullying and Harassment training course to meet the requirements of your company. If you are interested in finding out how HAZCON can assist you, please contact a member of our training team on 1800 429 266.

## CONTACT HAZCON

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