

# OHS Feature

## WorkSafe Takes Safety Message On The Road

WorkSafe Victoria will hold a second round of briefings on Victoria's new Occupational Health and Safety Act from April after the first sessions were booked out with more than 5000 attended briefings in January/February.

"This level of interest shows people are serious about preparing to meet new workplace safety laws, and reducing the preventable heartache and community cost of workplace injury," WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said.

The new Occupational Health and Safety Act was passed by Parliament in December. Most provisions of the Act take effect on 1 July 2005.

Statewide there were 32,040 reported injury claims in 2003-04. The total cost of these claims was \$1.0128 billion. Twenty-nine Victorian workplace deaths were reported to WorkSafe in 2004. Twenty-one of these were in regional Victoria, and 13 of these were on farms.

Mr Merritt said the State Government's new Act was aimed at reflecting the needs of the 21st century and represented an evolution of community expectations.

"If you already comply with the OHS laws, the old obligations will carry through and you will still be compliant, but it is worth having a look at the new laws and thinking about how your workplace can get ready for some of the new responsibilities," he said.

### Notes:

Of more than 32,000 Victorian workplace injury claims of more than 7,700 people received financial and other support two years or more after making a claim.



## FOOD SAFETY TRAINING

Food Safety Supervisors' Workshop at MGA V

• Saturday 30 April 2005

• Saturday 28 May 2005

• Saturday 25 June 2005

9am - 4pm Cost \$200 (inc. GST)

Includes all materials and lunch.



# 2005



AUSTRALIAN  
RETAILERS  
ASSOCIATION

## Features of the New Act Include:

A no-cost process so the decisions of WorkSafe inspectors can be internally and quickly reviewed without the need for court appeals.

WorkSafe inspectors can now provide advice on how to comply with the Act when they have identified safety breaches.

Workplaces will be able to agree to elect deputy health and safety representatives (HSRs) who will have the same powers in the absence of the primary health and safety representative. Initial and annual refresher training for HSRs is to be paid for by the employer.

The Act introduces a new general duty for employers to consult with employees, including contractors, about health and safety issues.

Maximum superior court penalties will rise to \$920,000 for a corporation and \$184,000 for an individual jail terms of up to five years may be imposed. Courts will be able to impose a range of alternative penalties. WorkSafe will publish clear prosecution guidelines so there is no doubt about what issues warrant investigation.

Senior decision-makers in large corporations can be held accountable for their actions concerning health and safety, just as small business operators are now.

Magistrates will be able to authorise representatives of registered employee organisations to enter workplaces under strict conditions.

A new requirement on the designers of workplaces to ensure buildings and structures are safe - effective 1 July 2006.

Mr Merritt said WorkSafe would also operate in a more constructive, transparent, accountable and effective way.

Workplace inspections and targeted programs will continue and poor performers will be prosecuted, but there will be even higher levels of consultation by the regulator. "Existing guidance material will be progressively updated and expanded," he said.

WorkSafe is working with employer organisations like VECCI, the Australian Industry Group and the Victorian Farmers Federation, as well as the Victorian Trades Hall Council to help improve workplace safety.

Sponsorship of the Victorian Country Football League and the Western Bulldogs football club is another way WorkSafe gets its safety messages to Victoria, but tackling this important issue really needs a team effort.

Ultimately safer workplaces will be created by people working together. By working together no one has to become a statistic...it can happen to you.

The next round of briefings are scheduled to begin in April. The new dates will be advertised in print media and will also be posted on the WorkSafe website.

### Find out more by:

Reading the Act on the net: Go to [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) to download and view the Act. Call Information Victoria on 1300 366 356 to order a printed copy of the Act (there is a charge for printed copies of the Act).

Visiting [www.worksafe.vic.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au) which is regularly updated (includes background and presentation material, information on future information briefings to be held around Victoria).

Contacting The Master Grocers.