

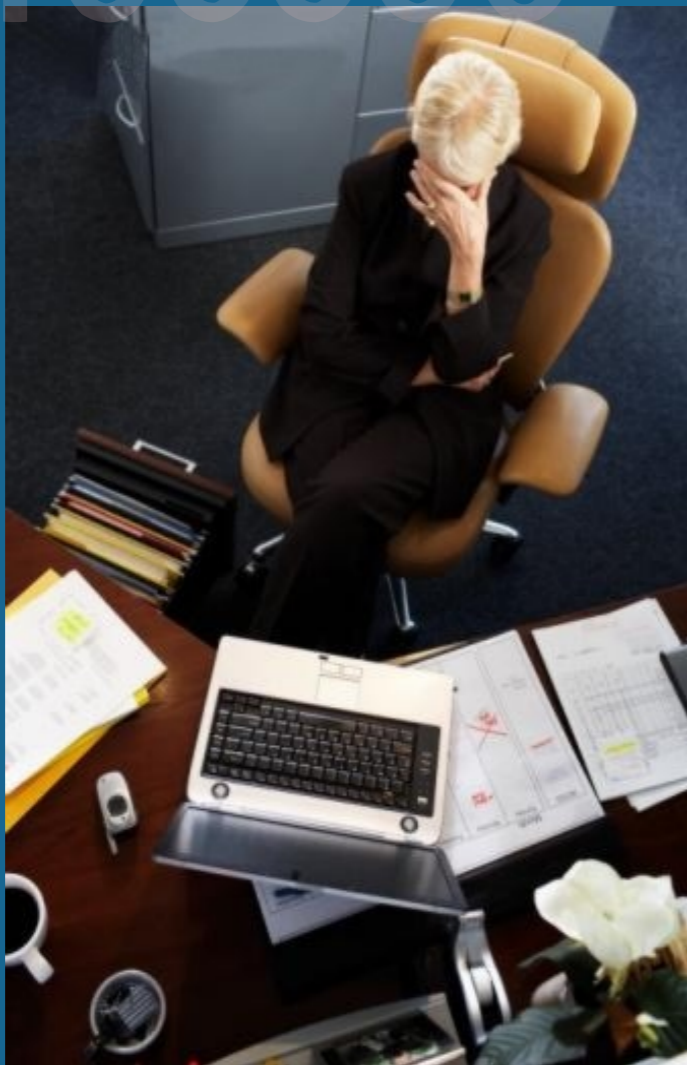
# Stressed Out!

You try to get everything done, and fast, hoping to have some time to breathe before you start again. But you can't. More and more duties start to wear you down. Why? Stress! Stress is the cause not only of mental strain, but of physical pain as well.

And there is evidence that stress and tension can have a profound effect on women in the workplace.

A study published in the Wisconsin Medical Journal in American found depression and tension was higher in women who only took vacations once in two years compared to women who every year took the chance to relieve tension. Nearly one out of five women were found to take holidays only after six years. Six years!

In Australia things are bit more relaxed with more holidays available, but many people are



finding themselves working harder and for longer hours

So taking a little break is important to keep your mind and body healthy. If possible, try to tackle fewer duties at a time, and give yourself some space to focus on the task at hand. If you're thinking of the next job before you've finished what you're already doing, it will only cause mistakes and headaches.

"If you don't take holidays you can find yourself just spinning like a wheel," says Heather Travers from the Conscious Living Expo. She says that working from home has allowed her to create a work environment that is free of stress.

But not everyone is as lucky as Heather and should try and manage their time to minimise stress. Having a number of things on the go at once can cause difficulties.

## Dementia and Alzheimer's

Dementia including Alzheimer's Disease, affects 190 000 people in Australia with that figure expected to reach over 730 000 by 2050. That's close to 3% of the population. In 2006 it is estimated there will be 54 000 new cases of dementia.

It's a challenge for the whole community and for workers in aged care services it is something they can encounter every day. It is also becoming increasingly common.

National Executive Director of Alzheimer's Australia Glen Rees said, "every seven seconds somewhere in the world there is a new case of dementia. The dementia epidemic has arrived."

The early signs of dementia can be very subtle and vague and may not be immediately obvious. "From a diagnostic point of view it isn't easy to pick-up the outward signs of dementia," said Safety First's Jenny Buchanan, "staff need some knowledge of how the brain works

and how the condition may be affecting their behaviour."

Safety First has developed a course "Person Centred Care" which will help carers and aged care workers to understand and care for clients with dementia.

For more information, contact Jenny.Buchanan@Safetyfirst.net.au



# 6.1 OSH BULLETIN

## 6.1 INCIDENT REPORT NEWSLETTER

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## Needlestick Risk

The risk posed by blood-borne diseases such as HIV, and Hepatitis A, B and C to workers in healthcare industries is very real. People work closely with clients and there are often bodily fluids involved with the work. What's more there is often the threat of a needle stick injury.

Community interest in the issue was heightened by a case last month, when a Dentist working for Queensland Health tested positive to HIV. Over 600 former patients had to be tested despite the Australian Dental Association playing down the risk posed to patients. "The risk is so low that if quantified, it would be less than one-thousandth of one per cent," the ADA said in a statement, "however the risk is not zero."

is an increased risk of occupational exposure for healthcare workers. The primary risk comes from needlestick injury. Victorian health researchers estimate that as there is approximately a 2% - 3% risk of hepatitis C infection from a needlestick injury.



They outlined that:

- ✓ Workers are properly trained in techniques for taking blood and 'intravenous cannula insertion';
- ✓ Adequate sharps-disposal containers are provided and 'sharps' procedures are followed;
- ✓ Safety cannulas are used where possible;
- ✓ Unnecessary procedures are avoided;
- ✓ Excessive workloads are avoided and adequate staff-client ratios are maintained.

It also recommended follow-up systems be put in place including appropriate counselling about hepatitis B and C virus and HIV infection.

### Limiting the Risk of Infection

There best way to avoid infection is to prevent needlestick injuries.

The Medical Journal of Australia have published a discussion paper proposing how the risk of needlestick injuries can be reduced.

Vaccination programs are put in place - where necessary - especially for hepatitis B.

*The Western Australian Branch of the Australian Nursing Federation were contacted for comment.*

## OSH HEADLINES

### English Language Crucial to Work Safety

The ability to read and understand English is crucial to workplace safety, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Robb said recently.

"Safety training and inductions, as well as signage, are almost always conducted in English so people must be able to understand the language if they are to work safely and effectively in the workplace," Mr Robb said.

### Spotlight on Driver Safety First

Safety while on the road is an ongoing issue for the community and for individuals while they are working.

WorkSafe is continuing their campaign to enforce driver fatigue laws in the commercial transport industry.

They are also investigating the death of a 19-year-old courier who died when her courier van rolled and hit a tree.

# Office Safe



## Trip Hazards

### Workspace

A workspace that simply isn't big enough poses a trip hazard. Good housekeeping and use of storage space can help with this.

### Carpets and Mats

If a carpet or mat isn't flush with the floor surface it is easy to trip on it. A quick solution is to use heavy duty gaffer tape to attach the edge of the mat to the floor.

Although, this is only an interim measure and the hazard should be reported on a 6.1 form, so that the problem is fixed.

### Electric Cords

Gaffer tape can also provide a solution to cords that can be a trip hazard. But always use the power plug closest to the appliance.

## Ergonomic Hazards

### Workspace

It's worth taking a moment to consider things such as chair height, seated posture, height of the computer screen, lighting and background noise when setting yourself up at your desk.

### Rest Breaks

Frequent short breaks are the best way to relieve strain when working on a keyboard for an extended period.

### Manual Handling

Moving boxes in and out of storage, moving furniture, appliances and archives can pose risks. Especially when the storage area is in an awkward position such as above head height or below a desk

# Avian Flu Virus

Perth researchers are expanding the trial of a vaccine against the potentially deadly Bird Flu Virus and have called for children and seniors to take part. South Australian health authorities are also injecting funds into bird flu preparations. Recently a passenger from Vietnam was quarantined when arriving in Australia with symptoms similar to bird flu. This activity is occurring while governments around the country maintain that the risk of the disease arriving in Australia remains low. However the question remains, what is the risk posed by bird flu?

Bird flu, also known as avian influenza, is an infectious type A influenza virus transferred from birds. Recently in Thailand and Indonesia outbreaks of the deadly flu caused human deaths resulting from infection.

In terms of reaching Australia however, the possibility of a pandemic is unlikely. When announcing the increase in funding in South Australia, Health Minister John Hill said, "the risk of something happening in the next year or two is probably pretty low but we still have to prepared for it."

If the virus does arrive on our shores, health care workers would find themselves on the front line. Dr Peter Richmond from Perth's Princess



Margaret Hospital said that the two age groups most at risk from influenza are young children and the elderly.

The bird flu virus can be transferred by contact with the virus and then the touching eyes, nose or mouth, or by sneezing and coughing and therefore poses a threat to health care

professionals. Regular washing of hands could be an effective precaution for these workers. People working with birds could also be at risk and it is essential they wear eye protection in the event of an Australian outbreak.

A vaccine against the virus remains an effective weapon against a widespread and lethal outbreak of bird flu and is being developed in large numbers of laboratories

around the world. "A very important part of controlling bird flu would be vaccination," continued Dr Richmond. He called for volunteers "to take part in this research to show how the vaccine works and (to) make sure it's well tolerated and safe."

## PROGRAM INFORMATION - All New Website!

If you're after any information about Occupational Safety and Health, Safety First has just launched a resource that can help.

### The New Safety First Website

Safety First's Michelle Julius was the mastermind behind the new look, "the new website has more features and opportunities for interaction, all our publications are available as well, which means it will help people stay up-to-date."

The website also features monthly Podcasts, which offers a new approach to bringing you the latest in OSH. The Podcast will include interviews, stories and features.

As well as that, signing up to the mailing list will grant you access to free online newsletters which will feature in-depth stories and information about OSH.



## Electrical Hazards

Poorly maintained electrical equipment can pose a risk of electric shock or electrocution.

## Virtual Office

Most people would think they know their way around their office fairly well, but do they know their way around the safety risks? The Federal Government has created a virtual office so workers can take a tour through an office laden with risks and hazards.

Safety First spoke to the creators of the virtual office.

"It seems likely that many people may believe that office environments have fewer hazards of low risk, particularly in comparison to work environments such as construction and heavy industry. This perception is probably due to the lower level of physical and traumatic injuries."

"No, hazards exist in all occupational environments. While hazards in the office may not always

be as obvious as those in industry or manual occupations, office workers face a range of health and safety issues resulting from such hazards as poor job design, prolonged repetitive work, moving heavy loads, inadequate lighting, cramped or unsafe work areas and customer aggression."

"Strains, sprains, cuts, bruises, vision problems and psychological injuries are the most common injuries occurring in office environments."

"Undertaking a risk assessment to identify all the actual or potential hazards, assessment of the risk from those hazards and the selection of appropriate controls to minimise or remove the hazard. Use the website for more information and guidance on this process. Both of these resources can be accessed from the

Safety Page of Comcare's website at [www.comcare.gov.au](http://www.comcare.gov.au)"

"Read the Virtual Office introduction page before you begin. To use Virtual Office simply click on the "room" you are interested in (e.g. "office"), then click on the item you are interested in (e.g. "computer") and a range of information on hazards and control measures relating to the item will appear."

