

the Cambridge Communiqué



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WE CREATE CONNECTIONS.

WE GET YOU THERE.

Seven 'Principles' for Successful Return to Work

The Institute of Work and Health, Toronto, Canada is an independent research centre established in 1990, and funded by the Ontario Safety and Insurance Board. With a focus on injury, illness and disability in the workplace, its mission is to promote, protect and improve worker health. From a review of research into the duration of work disability, the costs of work disability, and the quality of life of workers, the Institute developed seven principles for successful return to work.

Principle One

The workplace has a strong commitment to health and safety which is demonstrated by the behaviours of the workplace parties

The research emphasised the importance of physical and readily observable practices undertaken by the workplace to build a strong health and safety culture. These include:

- top management investment in safety and return to work (RTW) promotion
- company wide support for safety policies and return to work programs
- commitment to safety issues as the accepted norm across the organisation.

Principle Two

The employer makes an offer of modified work (also known as work accommodation) to injured/ill workers so they can return early and safely to work activities suitable to their abilities

The offer of modified work to accommodate the injured worker's condition was identified as a core element of disability management. Such an offer needs to effectively match the injured worker's condition and the ability of the workplace to accommodate this – not an easy task to achieve – but better RTW outcomes occur when undertaken successfully.

Principle Three

RTW planners ensure that the plan supports the returning worker without disadvantaging co-workers and supervisors

Return to work planning “must acknowledge RTW as a ‘socially fragile process’ where co-workers and supervisors may be thrust into new relationships and routines”. Plans should take into account the potentially disruptive nature of RTW accommodation and attempt to build, among the members of the work team, an atmosphere of cooperation and support.

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Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn edition of the Cambridge Communiqué, and welcome to 2008.

The emphasis on workplace safety continues unabated this year, as workplaces improve their efforts to protect employees and visitors to their worksites through;

- identifying workplace hazards
- implementing safety policies, procedures and controls, and
- facilitating effective and durable return to work outcomes for injured workers.

This year also promises to be significant with the Victorian government announcement of the Accident Compensation Act (1985) review. This review will focus on the relevance and suitability of the Act in areas such as benefit provision and administrative requirements, as well as undertake some interstate comparisons. We look forward to seeing the recommendations.

This year we will continue to bring you news, information and training services to better equip you, assist you to make informed decisions and keep you aware of your legislative obligations. I encourage you to review our education program and come along to our seminars and industry forums. These provide great opportunities to learn and share experiences with others who work in occupational health and safety and workers' compensation.

I ask each and every one of you to be vigilant about workplace safety, act quickly and in accordance with the law, and contact us or WorkSafe should you need assistance in any way.

Kind regards

Paul Serong
Managing Director
Chief Executive Officer

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Principle Four

Supervisors are trained in work disability prevention and included in RTW planning

The role of the supervisor in the RTW process is critical due to the close working relationship the supervisor has with the injured worker. Consequently, education of managers and supervisors in ways to effectively handle RTW issues is valuable.

Principle Five

The employer makes an early and considerate contact with injured/ill workers

Ideally contact should be made within the first week or two post injury but the individual circumstances of the injured worker must be taken into account. The review notes that '...in general, early contact is most successful when it builds on a workplace environment characterised by a shared sense of goodwill and confidence'.

Principle Six

Someone has the responsibility to coordinate RTW

Successful RTW programs involve a RTW coordinator whose responsibility it was to coordinate the RTW process and the people involved in the process.

Principle Seven

Employers and health care providers communicate with each other about the workplace demands as needed, and with the worker's consent

Effective communication between employers and health care providers reduces time off work. 'It follows that the more these players understand about the workers' job and the workplaces' ability to provide accommodation, the better able they are to advise workers and participate in informed RTW decision-making.'

This article is adapted from a paper presented by Siobhan Boyd-Squires, Manager WorkSafe Workplace Engagement Branch, during WorkSafe Week 2007, based on research conducted by the Institute for Work & Health. *Seven 'principles' for successful return to work.* Institute for Work & Health [online document] 2007 March [cited 2007 May 2]: [8 screens]. Available from: http://www.iwh.on.ca/products/images/RTW_7_principles.pdf

WorkSafe Online Employer Services

Last year WorkSafe launched the Employer Online Remuneration system which provided employers with the ability to complete their annual certification and estimation requirements for premium payment purposes online.

Approximately 20% of Victorian employers chose to certify their 2006/07 remuneration and estimate their remuneration for 2007/08 using the system. To date, 5% of the employers using the system have used it to revise their 2007/08 estimate – something they are legally obliged to do if they believe that actual payments will be higher than their current estimate.

Based on the feedback received from those who have used the system during 2007/08, WorkSafe is broadening the range of services provided online. Employers will soon be able to update their contact information and postal address online, and will also be able to obtain a Certificate of Currency electronically to evidence their status as a valid policy holder.

For further information about Online Employer Services visit the WorkSafe website at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au Information will also be available at the Annual Certification Seminars to be held in mid-July 2008.

Complying with Your Premium Obligations

WorkSafe Victoria's in-house compliance program was introduced in early 2006 to ensure equity and fairness across the scheme. As an employer, this means you should not be paying too much premium or, on the other hand, avoiding your premium responsibilities.

The program recognises that understanding your premium can be complex and challenging. Your focus will be on running your business, and you may not be aware of all the factors that can influence the calculation of your premium.

The new compliance program focuses on making premium calculation information more readily accessible and educating employers to better understand their premium obligations. A self assessment process has been introduced, providing the opportunity for employers to voluntarily disclose potential non-compliance with reduced penalties.

During 2006/07, over 700 employers in Victoria participated in the new compliance program resulting in premium adjustments of almost \$12 million.

During 2007/08, the compliance program will focus on all industries and select employers for participation in the program based on comprehensive data analysis and risk profiling. Particular emphasis will be placed on construction, labour hire and transport, and the treatment of contractors within these industries.

Guidance material will be available and industry specific seminars will be held prior to compliance programs being run across these industries. Employers are encouraged to take advantage of the information provided to ensure that they are up to date with their premium obligations.

For further information visit the WorkSafe website at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or contact Cambridge.



“particular emphasis will be placed on construction, labour hire and transport...”

MRISC Workshop

Planning for the Maintenance, Repair, Installation, Servicing and Cleaning (MRISC) of machinery and equipment does not have to be complicated or time-consuming.

Join WorkSafe in this interactive workshop to learn why and how planning and supervision can become part of your 'business as usual'. A must for all managers, supervisors and others involved with MRISC activities.

Workshops will be held between February 2008 and June 2008. Locations are: Mildura, Wangaratta, Ballarat, Geelong, Bendigo and Warragul, as well as Melbourne's South-East, North, North-East and West.

Register at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

The WorkSafe booklet, *Machinery and Equipment Safety – An Introduction* is available from WorkSafe. Email: info@worksafe.vic.gov.au or phone the OHS Consultants at Cambridge on **03 9947 3000** or email risk.management@cambridge-au.com

Equipment and Hazard Solutions for Handling People

Revised WorkSafe publication for the Health, Aged Care, Rehabilitation and Disability Sectors

Residences and treatment rooms for the frail aged and people with physical disabilities are often crowded with equipment used to reduce back and body strain for employees. It is important that there is sufficient space to store and use the equipment.

WorkSafe has upgraded *A Guide to Designing Workplaces for Safer Handling of People*. This 88 page guide includes advice on taking account of the needs of bariatric patients.

The chapter titled 'Area Specific Design Considerations for Safety Handling' addresses areas such as Bariatric patients, Rehabilitation, Day Procedure Units,

Maternity and Neonatal and Community Residential Accommodation. For each of these areas, hazards are identified. Each section concludes with 'Designing for Safer People Handling'.

There is a useful audit checklist at the back of the *Guide*.

Copies of this WorkSafe publication can be obtained from the WorkSafe Advisory Service phone **03 9641 1444** or toll free **1800 136 089** or email info@worksafe.vic.gov.au or from the Cambridge risk managers phone **03 9947 3000** or email risk.management@cambridge-au.com

How WorkSafe Applies OHS Law

WorkSafe Victoria has produced guidelines on how they apply key terms in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* to employers, viz:

- identifying and understanding hazards and risks
- 'reasonably practicable'.

A new part in the *OHS Act 2004* (Vic) allows WorkSafe to produce guidelines about provisions in OHS legislation and regulations.

The 2007 OHS Regulations do not require the employer to write formal risk assessments for such hazards as: manual handling, noise and the prevention of falls, except in construction, major hazard facilities and mines. The new guidelines suggest that to comply with the *OHS Act 2004*: 'Duty holders are obliged to understand, within the available state of knowledge, the nature and degree of harm that a hazard or risk may cause, how the harm can eventuate and the likelihood of that harm occurring.' Legal Acts override legal Regulations.

Under the *OHS Act 2004* (Vic) 'an employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, provide and maintain for employees of the employer a working environment that is safe and without risks to health' (section 21). Section 20 (2) of the *OHS Act 2004* (Vic) lists those matters the employer must have regard to, in determining what is

'reasonably practicable'. Other sections of this Act extend this obligation to contractors and persons on the employer's premises.

WorkSafe's guideline on 'reasonably practicable' says: 'The test for what is reasonably practicable is an objective test; that is, a person is to be judged by the standard of behaviour expected of a reasonable person in the duty-holder's position who is required to comply with the same duty and is:

- Committed to providing the highest level of protection for people against risks to their health and safety.
- Proactive in taking measures to protect the health and safety of people.'

The guideline then expands on the matters listed in section 20 (2) of the *OHS Act 2004*.

Download copies of these guidelines from the WorkSafe website

www.worksafe.vic.gov.au:

- *How WorkSafe applies the law in relation to identifying and undertaking hazards and risks*
- *How WorkSafe applies the law in relation to Reasonably Practicable*,

or ask a Cambridge OHS Consultant to send you a copy of the publications by phoning **03 9947 3000** and ask to speak to an OHS Consultant, or email: risk.management@cambridge-au.com).

“proactive in taking measures to protect the health and safety of people”



New Claim Forms for Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland

New worker and employer claim forms can be used to claim benefits in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland effective from 1 July, 2007.

The new forms are part of a WorkSafe initiative (the harmonisation project), which aims to lighten the administrative burden on employers who coordinate workers compensation in multiple states.

Features of the new forms include:

- the same form can be used to claim benefits in three states (state specific questions are shaded),
- state specific information on the front and back pages,
- no need for a witness to sign either form,
- fewer questions for the employer to complete, when in agreement with information given by the worker regarding the injury incident and earnings details.

Employers should start using the improved forms immediately and can order stock of the new forms by contacting WorkSafe publications on **03 9641 1444**, Cambridge via reception on **03 9947 3000**, or by dropping into their local post office.

Employers are asked to destroy old versions of the worker and employer claim forms, as any claim received on old forms after 30 June, 2008, must be returned to the employer as invalid at outset and cannot be registered. (This date has been extended from 31 December, 2007).

Only claim forms used for weekly compensation and/or medical and like services have changed, claim forms for all other types of benefits remain the same.

Suitable Employment – An Employer Responsibility

Once capacity for work is established, employers must provide injured workers, the worker's treating practitioner and the agent with a signed offer of suitable employment. *The Return to Work Guide for Victorian Employers* includes examples of a suitable employment offer checklist, suitable employment offer and job assessment matrix to assist employers in making a job assessment.

Section 5 of the Accident Compensation Act 'defines' suitable employment as follows:

"suitable employment, in relation to a worker, means employment in work for which the worker is currently suited (whether or not that work is available), having regard to the following –

- (a) the nature of the worker's incapacity and pre-injury employment;
- (b) the worker's age, education, skills and work experience;
- (c) the worker's place of residence;
- (d) the details given in medical information including the medical certificate supplied by the worker;
- (e) the worker's return to work plan, if any;
- (f) if any occupational rehabilitation services are being provided to or for the worker"

Keep Your Hot Spots in Check

Knowing what hazards to look out for in your workplace is the first step in preventing injuries. That's why WorkSafe has developed a new range of easy-to-follow guidance highlighting the most common workplace injuries.

Drawn from more than five years of claims data, the new 'Injury Hotspots' give an industry-wide snapshot of how people get injured, and what can be done to prevent those injuries.

Injury Hotspots pinpoint the parts of the body most likely to be injured, and the common causes of those injuries.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said because the Injury Hotspots were derived from WorkSafe's claims data, they provide powerful evidence for addressing specific safety risks.

The accompanying safety solutions are representative of the typical expectations of a WorkSafe inspector and provide a clear benchmark for achieving safety in the workplace.

"Knowing the Injury Hotspots for their industry will help employers target the biggest injury risks in their workplace. We believe this can have a significant impact on reducing injury rates."

"A good OHS record can favourably reflect on premium, so it pays to check your Injury

The employer's offer of suitable employment must be in writing and include:

- a request for a response from the worker within a reasonable, specified period
- a description of the duties and any relevant medical limitations
- the salary
- the proposed commencement date
- the days and hours of work, including any rest periods
- any occupational rehabilitation services which are to be provided in conjunction with the job
- the location of the job, and
- the date for revision or review of duties.

The Return to Work Guide for Victorian Employers can be downloaded from the WorkSafe website www.worksafe.vic.gov.au Cambridge also offers the Role of the Return to Work Coordinator two day training program designed to better equip Return to Work Coordinators in return to work strategies and compliance requirements. Please refer to our website for further details on this program www.cambridgeaustralia.com



"the employer's offer of suitable employment must be in writing"

Hotspots so your safety improvement program considers the things most likely to happen in your workplace," Mr Merritt said.

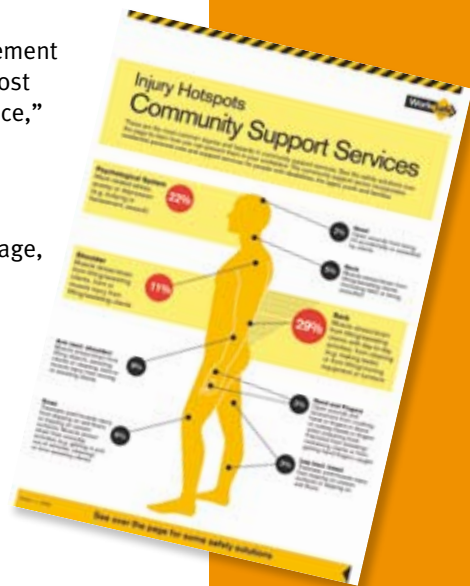
Initially focused on high-risk industries such as construction, manufacturing, agriculture, storage, emergency services and health, more Injury Hotspots are being developed.

"This information will be of real value in industries and occupations where health and safety is not front of mind, because it's clear and simple and gets straight to the point," Mr Merritt said.

"The hotspots data shows that the vast majority of workplace injuries are caused by well known hazards which have equally well known solutions."

"It's all about reminding Victorians that there are real risks in every workplace and there are proven ways to control safety risks," Mr Merritt said.

The first set of Injury Hotspots fact sheets will be available from Cambridge by the end of February, or you can view Injury Hotspots for your industry through the interactive portal on the WorkSafe website, www.worksafe.vic.gov.au





A Guide to Manual Order Picking

A Guide to Manual Order Picking is a 16 page publication which outlines work practices that employers must comply with to meet WorkSafe's expectations.

The guide details what high risk work practices should be avoided and lower risk solutions (including equipment and layout alternatives and suggestions).

Over 280 claims from manual handling through order picking injuries occur in Victoria each year, at a cost of \$11.5 million which clearly shows that manual order picking is an injury black spot.

A Guide to Manual Order Picking is available for download at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or by calling WorkSafe on **1800 136 089**.

Young Workers at Higher Risk

WorkSafe Victoria is calling on employers to ensure proper training and supervision is provided to young workers entering the workforce.

"Young Victorian workers between 15 and 25 have the highest proportion of work-related injuries as well as a higher rate of hospitalisation than other age groups," WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt said.

"Young and inexperienced workers are coming into the workforce in many areas, but particularly as shop assistants, hospitality and warehouses."

"They need a higher level of supervision than experienced people and should never be left alone to work."

To help Victorian employers make their workplaces safe for young workers WorkSafe has just released three new publications aimed at young workers and their employers.

The *Work experience induction checklist*, *Training checklist for young workers* and *Safety tips for young workers* are easy to read guides that address issues from training to supervision.

The new publications also address the responsibilities of young workers in the workplace.

"Safety isn't a one way street. It also needs young workers letting their supervisor know if they are unsure about dangers or risks as well as acting in a manner that doesn't jeopardise the safety of their fellow workmates" Mr Merritt said.

The 'Training checklist for young workers', 'Safety tips for young workers' and the 'Work experience induction checklist' can be found under 'Publications' on WorkSafe's website www.worksafe.vic.gov.au

"safety tips for young workers are easy to read guides"



Employer Return to Work Networks – What's On in 2008

WorkSafe's Employer RTW Networks are designed to provide Return to Work Coordinators and others who play a role in helping injured workers back to work with relevant and practical information relating to best practice return to work.

The 2008 events calendar for all networks is now available on the WorkSafe website and allows employers to view dates and topics, and register online for any event. Upcoming sessions include:

April 3 2008: The *Southern Network* presents "Communicating with Doctors". This is one of WorkSafe's most popular topics! Hear practical information from a medical practitioner familiar with the Scheme. Learn how you can interact more effectively with doctors and other health providers in order to achieve improved RTW planning and progression for your injured worker.

May 1 2008: The *Western Network* will see the inaugural launch of the topic "RTW

Service and your Agent". This session aims to educate you about ways in which you can gain the best service from your Agent. You will also be provided with valuable insight into tools, resources and strategies available to help you improve your RTW performance and obtain the support you need.

May 27 2008: WorkSafe Injury Insurance indicative notices are sent to employers at the end of May so why not attend the "RTW and your Premium" session at the *Northern Network*? This session will focus on ways in which good RTW practices can result in reduced premiums. Practical online tools available to employers will also be demonstrated.

For more information about the Return to Work Networks or upcoming events in 2008, please visit the WorkSafe website at www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or email rtw_networks@workcover.vic.gov.au

Accident Compensation Legislation to be Updated

After more than 20 years of operation, Victoria's *Accident Compensation Act* is to be updated. This legislation is the basis of a workers' compensation scheme that has provided support to hundreds of thousands of injured workers.

"While the underlying principles of the Act remain sound, incremental changes over the years have made it unwieldy and unnecessarily complex," said Tim Holding, the Minister for Finance, WorkCover and the Transport Accident Commission.

Mr Holding said Victoria's WorkCover scheme was the best in Australia, offering generous benefits and good return-to-work outcomes for injured workers as well as low premiums for employers.

Mr Holding said the legislation was being independently reviewed to ensure appropriate support and services continued to be provided to injured workers and to make the system more efficient.

The review will examine the operation of the *Accident Compensation Act 1985* and associated legislation, focusing on:

- the benefit and premium regime when compared with other jurisdictions;
- ways to ensure the best possible support is provided to injured workers;
- ways to reduce the administrative and regulatory burden on Victorian business;
- the removal of inoperative, irrelevant and superfluous legislative provisions; and
- improving understanding of the accident compensation regime.

The independent review is being chaired by Mr Peter Hanks QC, a pre-eminent constitutional and administrative lawyer.

A stakeholder reference group has been appointed to assist the review, consisting of organisations representing workers and employers and representatives of key legal and medical groups. Public submissions will be invited.



"the legislation was being independently reviewed to ensure appropriate support"

WorkCover Payment Reimbursements – Don't Forget!

It is now a WorkSafe requirement that you make a written request for reimbursement within three months of making a payment to your worker.

The reimbursement form can be downloaded from www.cambridgeaustralia.com

Congratulations to Michael Schembri

Mr Michael Schembri (pictured) is the first Victorian to receive QCOMP (Queensland's workers' compensation regulatory authority) accreditation as a return to work coordinator under the Queensland, NSW and Victoria government harmonisation initiative.

The various Australian workers' compensation schemes are collaboratively implementing initiatives to harmonise aspects of their operations. An initial component is the development of training to enable recognition of return to work coordinators across multiple states, in this case Queensland and Victoria.

After completing the two day 'Role of a Return to Work Coordinator' training course with Cambridge in Melbourne, Michael successfully completed the QCOMP self paced module, and is now recognised as a trained return to work coordinator in both Queensland and Victoria.

Michael is the HSE and QA Manager for Concept Hire, leading suppliers of scaffold equipment and associated services to the building and construction industry.

Michael's aim is to conquer NSW next! We wish him the best of luck.

If you are interested in becoming an accredited RTW Coordinator in Victoria, or looking to have your accreditation recognised in Queensland or NSW, please contact the Cambridge Training Coordinator via email at communiqué@cambridge-au.com or by telephoning **03 9947 3090**.



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Emergencies – Be Prepared

Medium to large organisations need to be prepared to evacuate their staff, when required, in an emergency. There are two guides to emergency planning: Australian Standard AS 3745-2002 (*Emergency control organisation and procedures for buildings, structures and workplaces*) and the *Building Code of Australia*.

Cambridge has produced a SafetySheet on emergencies (Number 006 Emergency Procedures). The two lists below have been extracted from our SafetySheet.

How to design an emergency plan

1. Identify all possible emergency conditions
2. Consider appointing an Emergency Coordinator to take control in an emergency
3. Establish what action needs to be taken in specific cases (e.g. chemical spill)
4. Establish alarm signals where appropriate
5. Survey the need for emergency equipment (e.g. fire extinguishers, ropes etc)
6. Identify communication needs and processes for use during the emergency
7. Identify if a search and rescue plan will be needed
8. Determine the following services, and the processes that are required:
 - Emergency services that need notifying: how and by whom
 - Where to provide emergency procedure information
 - Back-up systems, such as emergency lighting and power
 - Alarm systems e.g. smoke detectors, alarms to fire brigade and hazardous substance warning
 - Procedures required to account for all personnel on site (including visitors)
 - Shut-down procedures for processes, machinery, and chemical plant
 - Training and drills required by employees and contractors
9. Establish first aid training requirements
10. Consider ways of protecting vital records, e.g. payroll and computer software

11. Consider the need for release of information to groups (e.g. public and media)
12. Clarify an all-clear and re-entry procedure
13. Consider and develop a plan to enable a speedy return to normal operations
14. Ensure that all details of the plan are documented and that employees are suitably trained
15. Display emergency evacuation diagrams in suitable places throughout the workplace.

Building Code of Australia

The Building Code of Australia requires:

- An unobstructed pathway to exit the building of 1 metre wide and 2 metres high
- Exit doors and landings must be unobstructed at all times
- Usually all exit doors must swing in the direction of egress (exiting)
- Exit doors must be readily operable without a key from the side facing the person seeking egress, by a single device which is located between 900 mm – 1020 mm from the floor
- Emergency exit lighting system is required in large areas of a building and along the path of travel
- All new exit signs are to have the 'running man' international symbol on them
- In larger areas, you should be able to see an illuminated exit sign from wherever you stand.

SafetySheets available

The Cambridge Emergency Procedures Safety Sheet, and SafetySheets on a wide range of topics, can be found on our website www.cambridgeaustralia.com

Our OHS Risk Consultants can be contacted at risk.management@cambridge-au.com

Cambridge Education Program

We are pleased to announce the launch of our 2008 education program.

Topics this year include:

- The Role of a Return to Work Coordinator
- Introduction to Workers' Compensation
- OHS in the Office, and
- Managing Psychological Risks.

For full details see our brochure in this issue of Communiqué, download our brochure from www.cambridgeaustralia.com or call our Cambridge Training Coordinator on **03 9947 3090**.