



# Safety Net



HERE TO SUPPORT YOU



## Welcome

### Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the first edition of Safety Net for 2007. This year has already seen a number of achievements in the health and safety arena and I look forward to supporting a range of major initiatives throughout 2007. The Corporate Workplace Health and Safety Standing Committee continues to be an active and effective forum for raising and resolving issues at a state-wide level, you will note that the new procedure HLS-PR-016 "Workplace Health and Safety Consultative Framework" has been published on the Education Policy and Procedures Register.

Last year, my Branch coordinated the release and analysis of the Human Resources Survey which collected data on a range of very useful information including teacher qualifications. The data from this survey has already proven to be invaluable in our strategic decision making. The inclusion of organisational health related questions in the 2007 survey highlights the department's increased focus on this management function.

This edition of Safety Net contains a wealth of information with a focus on issues that impact on us during the beginning of the school year.

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**Assistant Director-General**

**Strategic Human Resources**

### New Health and Safety Procedures

#### Workplace Health and Safety Consultative Framework—HLS-PR-016

This procedure details the communication and consultation processes required to facilitate safe and healthy working and learning environments and to meet legislated health and safety obligations.

This new procedure details the specific requirements of schools, regions and the department to establish consultative processes to discuss and resolve health and safety issues.

Templates for health and safety committee agendas as well as minutes are provided within the procedure. The procedure can be viewed on the Education Policy and Procedures Register at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hlspr016/>.

#### Health & Safety Incident Recording & Notification Procedure—HLS-PR-005

This procedure is a replacement and enhancement of DOEM policy "HS-08: Injury, Illness and Dangerous Event Recording and Reporting".

The new document provides the procedure for health and safety incident recording for school and non-school locations within the department as required by legislation.

The procedure addresses the recording, notification and investigation of health and safety incidents and outlines the responsibilities of school and non-school staff.

Useful forms are included in the procedure as well as three new guidelines to assist schools and workplaces address this topic. The procedure can be viewed in full on the EPPR at: <http://www.qed.qld.gov.au/strategic/eppr/health/hlspr005/>.



# Don't let these slip through the Net

## Woodworking and Metalworking Assessments

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ) have advised of their intention to undertake a proactive assessment of woodworking and metalworking facilities in schools.

The aim of the assessment by WHSQ is to promote safe management practices in schools and assess compliance with the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

Schools will be randomly selected by WHSQ but will be contacted prior to the visit to organise a suitable date and time.

**For more information please refer to the following information sheets:**

- **Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Assessments – Woodworking and Metal working Workshops**  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/whsqassessments.pdf>. This information sheet provides information on the regions where the assessments will occur and the best way to approach the assessment.
- **Workplace Health and Safety Queensland Inspectors**  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/schoolvisitbywhsqinspectors.pdf> This fact sheet details the role of WHSQ inspectors as well as their powers under the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995*.

## Back to School Checklist

Creating and maintaining healthy and safe learning and working environments is both our commitment and our challenge for 2007. With this in mind, here are a number of simple things you can do to help start the new year in a safe and healthy manner:

- Prevent strains and sprains by ensuring staff moving furniture and resources have enough time, assistance and equipment to do the task easily and safely.  
*If moving major items is required, contractors may be the most effective option.*
- Keep walkways and common areas clear and unobstructed to prevent the risk of trips and falls. Encourage staff to tidy staff room areas, cull resources and prioritise requirements for storage.
- Reinforce the importance of staff wearing appropriate footwear for the school environment and the task they are undertaking e.g. traversing stairs and uneven surfaces, supervising sport and practical classes, playground duty etc.
- Serious injuries associated with staff involved in school sport activities are common. Remind all staff to assess their own ability to physically participate in the activity, warm up adequately, wear appropriate clothing and engage in the activity according to their level of fitness.
- Sun safe behaviour is important for staff well being and to model to students. Staff working outside should wear a hat, appropriate clothing and sunscreen. Encourage staff to drink water regularly and to be aware of strategies to prevent heat stress.
- Informing new staff and volunteers of procedures, health and safety information and expectations at your school is an important part of the induction process. Don't forget part-time staff, cleaners and schools officers.  
*Advise staff of local contacts including; school WHSO, Rehab and Return to Work Coordinator and regional support including; the Employee Assistance Service and other Organisational Health Staff.*
- If a staff member has sustained an injury or illness during the holidays, or is returning to work with a pre-existing injury or illness, enquire into whether they need any assistance to return to work safely.  
*Ask staff to provide their doctor's recommendations regarding their limitations and requirements e.g. safe access to classrooms and facilities.*
- Encourage and support staff with new year's resolutions or ideas about wellbeing activities e.g. walking groups, morning tai chi, social events etc.
- Should you require any assistance, discuss these issues with your WHSO, Rehab and Return to Work Coordinator or your Regional Organisational Health Staff.

## After Hours Activities - Keeping Visitors Safe When Attending Functions at Your School

**Reminder** - Principals, managers and supervisors have responsibilities for the health, safety and wellbeing of all persons who work under their direction or who have access to schools/workplaces or work activities under their control. This extends to visitors to worksites such as parents and others attending school functions, parent/teacher evenings and similar events.

Many health and safety incidents occur at schools after hours and may be a result of poor lighting conditions, uneven surfaces and trip hazards.

It is therefore important that schools ensure that the safety of your school community is considered when planning an event, particularly if the activity takes place in the evening. This would include adequate after-hours lighting, minimising trip hazards and directing visitors along the safest path to the event (e.g. signage, maps, roping off).

Grounds maintenance should also be addressed if visitors will be traversing parts of the school grounds such as ovals during fetes or sports carnivals.

## Health and Safety Committees

The creation of safe and healthy working and learning environments is a priority for the department. Effective health and safety committees are essential for school and non-school locations to raise and resolve health and safety issues.

The roles of the health and safety committee are:

- > encouraging an active interest in health and safety
- > considering training and education needs
- > addressing standards, policy, procedure and guidelines
- > reviewing the local health and safety incidents to prevent recurrence
- > advising the principal/manager on health and safety issues.

Effective committees will utilise the expertise within the school/workplace in conjunction with data available on health and safety incidents and hazards.

A consultative mechanism has been established through procedure [HLS-PR-016 Workplace Health and Safety Consultative Framework](#) to allow health and safety committees and forums achieve positive outcomes.

### INFLUENZA VACCINATION IN 2007

Home Therapeutics has been appointed as the preferred supplier of influenza vaccination clinics in school and non-school locations. Participation in the program is voluntary and subject to funding approval from the Principal/manager.

#### Cost per vaccination is \$20

In late February/early March your school/workplace will receive a phone call or email directly from Home Therapeutics with a link to a secure website to arrange clinics, provide access to useful information and answers to frequently asked questions. Please refer to the fact sheet: [Influenza Vaccination 2007](#)

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/influenza-vaccination-2007-factsheet.pdf>

### WHSO Courses in 2007

The Organisational Health Unit is pleased to offer WHSO courses again this year. These courses are tailored to the school environment and provide new and continuing WHSOs with the skills to assist Principals manage school health and safety issues and risks.

Participants will complete the Annual Assessment as part of the assessment process. This is invaluable for new WHSOs who must complete the Annual Assessment each year as part of their role. Courses are offered around the state – check out the [2007 WHSO Calendar](#): <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/whsflyer-07.pdf>

Course registration can now be completed on line; don't miss the opportunity to attend a relevant course at a cheaper price to other commercial courses. Course costs include catering, resources and course notes.

### Q fever – Commonwealth Funding for Vaccinations Ceased

Over the past two years, school staff and students have been accessing Q fever vaccination, through commonwealth funding for the *National Q fever Vaccination Program*. In Queensland, this program was coordinated by Queensland Health.

The commonwealth funding that was subsidising this program was ceased as of December 2000. Therefore Queensland Health are no longer coordinating subsidised vaccination for any “at risk” groups.

Schools are reminded that standard precautions and good hygiene practices are still essential in preventing the spread of this disease.

For further information on Q fever:

- Refer to the web site [www.qfever.org](http://www.qfever.org)
- Speak with a public health nurse from your local [Queensland Health, Public Health Unit](#) [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/orq\\_chart.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/orq_chart.asp)

### CONSTRUCTION BLUE CARD (GENERAL INDUCTION TRAINING) UPDATE

Thank you to all those people who responded to the survey about General Induction (Construction Blue Card) Training for Schools Officers. The training is due to start in Term 2 and will be conducted by Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultants.

The courses will be extended to a full day session so Schools Officers will obtain the Blue Card as well as information and resources specific to their role. Further information on dates and locations of training will be advertised in the Regular Schools Update, CHW Discussion List, SafetyNet and through your regional networks. For information about the Construction Blue Card please refer to the [Fact Sheet](#) available at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/construct-blue-card.pdf>.

## Hand Washing - Soap in Schools

All schools should review and address the facilities provided for staff and students to wash their hands at school. Hand washing is one of the most important measures in preventing transmission of infection.

Enteric infections, including gastroenteritis and hepatitis A are common amongst people of all ages. It is very important that children are provided with adequate hand washing facilities as a basic health measure.

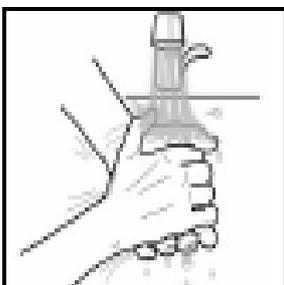
Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Qld Health and our own Infection Control Guidelines which have been in place since 2000, recommend that "mild liquid soap and paper towels or air dryers should be available at hand basins".

**Staff and students should always follow basic good hygiene practices which require that hands be washed using soap, water and then dried:**

- > **Before handling, preparing or eating food**
- > **Before and after assisting students with eating/meals**
- > **Before and after assisting students with toileting**
- > **Before and after providing first aid or medication**
- > **Before and after contact with an ill or injured person**
- > **After contact with blood or bodily fluids**
- > **After removal of protective gloves**
- > **After using the toilet and**
- > **After contact with animals.**

To reinforce correct hand washing techniques, a copy of the picture "[Hand Washing Technique](#)" This should be laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve and attached to the wall near hand washing facilities.

More information can be found in the new [Infection Control Guideline](http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/infection_control_guideline.pdf) (http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/infection\_control\_guideline.pdf) which has recently replaced DOEM HS-18 "Infection Control" originally published in 2000.



## Explosion Hazard - Cutting of Drums

See the School Safety Alert at:

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/drum-explosions-school-safety-alert.pdf>

### What is the Issue?

Drums of various capacities e.g. 200L (44 gallon and smaller) are often recycled and reused as storage containers. This practice has been common in agricultural settings where empty drums are cut to create storage containers or feed troughs. Typically, drums are cut using an angle grinder, plasma cutter, oxyacetylene or welding equipment.

### How was the hazard identified?

A number of serious and fatal accidents have occurred at workplaces during the cutting of 205, 60, or 20 litre steel fuel drums. More recently in the school environment, a student was killed when a 205 litre drum exploded in an agriculture skills course. The student was using a plasma arc cutting torch to convert the drum into a feed bin. The drum had previously contained diesel engine oil which exploded after contact with the heat of the cutting torch.

### What is the Hazard?

Investigations into explosions reveal that:

- Drums were not cleaned properly.
- Bungs were not removed when drums were cleaned.
- Drums were used as trestles to support other steelwork
- Knowledge of the associated hazards was lacking.

### What are the risks?

Drums that contain residual flammable substances or vapours may explode when exposed to heat. Additionally, drums that have contained substances such as pesticides may release the poison in gaseous form when exposed to heat.

### What are the controls?

- Never cut drums that have contained flammable liquids or flammable gases. Even drums that have been empty for a very long time can contain enough residual substance to explode and/or emit hazardous gas when exposed to heat. Be aware that rinsing drums with water is not a fail-safe method purging any vapours from containers.
- Do not apply heat to drums that have held other chemicals such as pesticides as any gas emitted may cause serious harm to health. Never weld or grind near empty drums.
- Do not use drums as a welding or work platform.
- Correctly label all drums on-site.
- Have Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDSs) available for all products.
- Dispose of drums appropriately.
- Store empty drums in a well-ventilated place away from other work areas (bungs removed).
- If drums are to be recycled, use a specialist. There are companies that specialise in the correct cleaning, gas monitoring and cutting of drums.

### CHECK LIST

#### What has the drum been used for?

- Was it a flammable liquid or gas?
- Was it a chemical?
- Is there a hazard diamond on the label?

If you answer "Yes" to any of the above or you are unsure of what has been previously stored in the container -

#### **DO NOT APPLY HEAT TO THE DRUM.**

**Related Hazards:** Do not use pressure (e.g. air pressure) to remove dents from drums as they commonly over-fill and burst.

Further information: [http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/home.nsf/pages/construction\\_safety](http://www.workcover.vic.gov.au/vwa/home.nsf/pages/construction_safety)