



Safety Net



Welcome

HERE TO SUPPORT YOU



Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the final edition of Safety Net for 2008. This term the department appointed Noel Arnold and Associates to undertake an audit of our health and safety management systems in accordance with the Cabinet endorsed *Safety and Healthier Workplaces Strategy 2007-20012*. The auditors visited 17 schools, 3 regional offices and 3 TAFE institutes across Far North, South Coast and Wide Bay regions.

I would like to thank all those who have been involved in supporting this process, from organising the auditors' visits through to allowing the external auditors to review factors specific to your school. The findings of this department wide audit will be used to develop the next *Health, Safety and Wellbeing Action Plan* which will be in place for three years: 2009 - 2011.

I would also like to take this opportunity to bring to your attention the structures that are in place to assist you with health and safety matters. At schools there should be a workplace health and safety committee for the discussion of health and safety issues. At the regional level there is a Regional Health and Safety Standing Committee where issues that may be beyond the scope of the school, or may have regional / state-wide impact can be raised. To discuss having an agenda item be placed on the Regional Health and Safety Standing Committee please contact your Regional Senior Health and Safety Consultant at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/hscontacts.html>

Regional Committees ultimately report state-wide issues to the Corporate Workplace Health and Safety Standing Committee. As this is a two way communication process, I hope that you will soon be receiving minutes of your Regional Workplace Health and Safety Standing Committees.

Finally, as the academic year draws to a close, I would like to thank everyone for their dedication to the health and wellbeing of staff and students across the state and wish you all a safe festive season.

Tom Barlow

Executive Director - Human Resource Strategy (Training)

Chair - Corporate Workplace Health and Safety Standing Committee.



Stress Less this Christmas



Christmas is a busy time of year and, despite the fun and festivities, brings many challenges. Looking after ourselves is vital to our survival during this season. Whilst December is a happy season for many people it can be a stressful time both emotionally and financially.

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts' Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provides a range of supportive psychological health services to employees. Services include free short-term counselling as well as some presentations, critical incident debriefing and group work. These services assist individuals and school communities to increase psychological resilience, improve communication, develop positive work relationships and enhance well-being.

The EAS is delivered by Employee Advisors across the state who are qualified psychologists or social workers. Employee Advisors are based in each region and may use external psychologists under extenuating circumstances to provide some counselling sessions.

For employees located in Central Office, Online Learning (previously known as AccessEd) or Disability Support Services, psychological counselling is provided by Langmont Advantage. Employee Advisors' leave has been scheduled so that back up is available from a neighbouring region if required. To contact your local Employee Advisor please refer to: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/contacts-ea.html>



Don't let these slip through the Net

Industrial Design and Technology - Safety Information Workshop in Wide Bay-Burnett Region

Thanks to Liz Lindsay – Senior Health and Safety Consultant for the Wide Bay-Burnett Region for organising a Industrial Design and Technology Workshop on the 9th of September 2008. By all accounts the workshop was very successful and was well attended by schools from the region.

Thanks to guest speakers, who included: Rob Noble, Regional Operations Manager, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ); Alan Kayrooz, Senior Inspector (WHSQ); Phil Cooper, Organisational Health Unit – DETA; Malcolm Lee, Gympie State High School and Kirsti Kee, RED – Wide Bay Burnett Region.

Health and Safety Incident Reporting

Reminder: please be sure to enter health and safety incidents into your SMS - Workplace Health and Safety Module and fax the notifications to the relevant locations ASAP. It has been noted that there have been some significant time delays between incidents in schools and notification to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, the Region or Central Office. Please remember that unless relevant staff are aware of incidents in your school, the department cannot provide appropriate support.

START PLANNING FOR YOUR 2009 INFLUENZA VACCINATION CLINIC - NOW!

We all know that the 'flu' season usually runs from May to September each year however, if you want to be vaccinated you need to receive your "flu shot" much earlier (i.e. usually during the months from February to May).

Workplace vaccination clinics are a way to demonstrate commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of the staff at your school/office. Immunization can reduce absenteeism, replacement and overtime costs, interruption of service delivery, re-scheduling of important events, extended health costs and many other unwanted disruptions at your school/office.

In 2009, the Department will once again support a preferred supplier arrangement (with *HealthVAX*) for the provision of influenza vaccine. The 2008 program was very successful with many people vaccinated across the state. This high demand did however lead to scheduling issues for those schools/workplaces that had not planned and booked their vaccination clinic early enough.

Internal discussions need to commence now at your school/workplace about whether you/your staff wish to be involved in the program. Stay tuned for more information.

NOTE: PLEASE PUT "FLU VACCINATIONS" ON YOUR STAFF MEETING AGENDA FOR THE 22nd AND 23rd of JANUARY 2009.



Changes to the Workplace Health and Safety Act



A number of new provisions of the *Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995* will commence on 1 January 2009. The most relevant one for our department is the "removal of the shield of the crown" which will allow government departments to be prosecuted and will also allow "on the spot fines" to be issued. This has been introduced to ensure there is equity in enforcement options for both privately owned businesses and government.

The Organisational Health Unit will continue to liaise with WHSQ regarding how this legislation will specifically apply to our department in practice and provide additional information in the new year.

The other major amendment relates to the introduction of provisional improvement notices (PINs) by Workplace Health and Safety Representatives (WHSR). It is expected that these provisions will not commence until mid 2009; the date is yet to be announced.

A PIN will be able to be issued by a WHSR where the WHSR believes, on reasonable grounds, that a person is breaching or has breached a provision of the WHS Act or regulations. The WHSR will be required to follow a number of steps prior to issuing a PIN. This will include completing approved training and undertaking consultation on the issue.

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland is currently developing guidance material relating to training, issuing of PINs and undertaking consultation.



What's on the Safety Net?



SCHOOL BASED EMPLOYEES WORKING DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

It is a common practice for employees to go to school during the holidays to undertake work in preparation for the upcoming year. It is important to be aware that even though this work is undertaken during the school holidays, the Department still has a duty of care to ensure health and safety. In addition, should an employee be injured while performing work related activities at the school during school holidays, they are still entitled to lodge a WorkCover claim.

As the officer in charge of a school, it is the Principal's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all employees while they are undertaking work related activities. Principals are therefore required to undertake the following actions:

- ★ Ensure you are aware of all work related activities that are going to occur during the school holidays, including the names of all employees involved and when the activities will occur. You may wish to discuss this at the last staff meeting before the holidays and include this in a staff newsletter.
- ★ Identify if any of the activities that staff members are planning to undertake during the school holidays may present a health and safety risk (e.g. moving furniture between classrooms).
- ★ Organise for a risk assessment to be undertaken to assist in planning the activity, prioritising risks and deciding on ways to manage any issues. Your Workplace Health & Safety Officer (WHSO) will be able to assist with this.
- ★ Review the risk assessment, and/or plan, to ensure the activity will not place the employee at risk of injury. If satisfied, approve that the activity is able to proceed as planned. Keep a record of related documentation.
- ★ Personal security is extremely important, if a member of staff is attending the school be sure others know they are at the school and that their safety and security is a priority whilst at the school. If an incident does occur during the school holidays, ensure that a Workplace Health & Safety Incident Report Form is completed and entered on SMS.

The Creating Healthier Workplaces Discussion List

The **Creating Healthier Workplaces** (CHW) discussion list is an email forum for school and non-school staff to ask questions, share ideas and solutions and gain advice on organisational health topics. These include health and safety, rehabilitation, employee assistance and health promotion.

Anyone involved or interested in organisational health may benefit from the list such as Workplace Health and Safety Officers and Representatives, Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinators, Principals/Managers/Deputies and Business Services Managers etc.

Discussions on the list range from basic queries, like how pesticides should be used safely, to complex issues such as managing health and safety resources in schools.

Messages to the list will be received by all list members for their consideration/comment. Many queries will be answered directly by members. Some issues will require a departmental response or position, which will be provided by the Organisational Health Unit.

Archives

The discussion list has an archives section with a search function that allows you to view past messages and responses. As many commonly asked questions have already been discussed please check the [archives](#) first to see if your question has already been answered. It has an easy to use 'search function'.

Advertising

This list is not to be used to advertise or promote the sale of products unless approved by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts.

To start using the discussion list, go to: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/discussion.html>

