



Welcome

HERE TO SUPPORT YOU

All government agencies are currently involved in processes to implement the *Safer Workplaces* strategy. The *Safer Workplaces* strategy has been initiated by the Department of Industrial Relations (DIR) to reflect Australia-wide targets established by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC). To support the achievement of the national targets the Queensland Government has a goal to reduce injuries and achieve a 10 percent decrease in statutory workers' compensation claims payments per year for two years, starting from 1 July 2004.

One element of the Safer Workplaces Strategy is to encourage departments to establish systems that monitor health and safety performance. DIR has produced guidelines to assist departments to identify key components for this process.

Factors include systematic identification and control of risks, incident reporting and analysis, consultation and record keeping. These are the basics of any effective health and safety management system, so the Safer Workplaces Strategy supports initiatives and practices that are already underway in EQ schools. This national focus will help government departments develop better systems to *proactively* manage health and safety.

2004 has been a year of many changes and new projects for schools. Thank you for your continued efforts over this last stretch of the school year. The end of year holiday will be well deserved as always.

Craig Allen
A/Director—Human Resource Services



Catch of the day!

EQ Specific WHSO Course!!

The very positive feedback received from staff attending Workplace Health & Safety Officer (WHSO) courses where our own Health & Safety Consultants had input indicates that there is a demand for EQ to provide our own "school focused" WHSO training. This will allow school staff to obtain relevant and practical information that also meets WHSQ's training requirements.

The Health & Safety Team is pleased to announce that Alan Singleton has been appointed to the position of Principal Consultant, WH&S Training and Promotion. Alan has been in the role of Senior H&S Consultant for the past 5 years. Alan will remain based in Toowoomba and travel around the state to deliver EQ specific WHSO training courses.

It is anticipated that EQ will also be able to develop and deliver training for school based WHS Reps in the future.

Our new EQ specific WHSO Course has a range of benefits for schools and individuals participating in the program. This initiative allows EQ to:

- keep course costs to a minimum
- maximise the return on the school's training investment
- ensure course assignments and case studies benefit the participant's school by assessing the real needs and conditions of their school
- be involved in actively promoting WH&S compliance across the state at all levels of the organisation
- inform schools of new initiatives, programs and statutory requirements
- maintain strategic control of training direction
- keep training fresh, relevant and in touch with school needs.

If you have any queries about WHSO Courses please contact **Alan Singleton** on 0428 455 798 or email alan.singleton@qed.qld.gov.au



Don't let these slip through the Net

PREVENTING BACK INJURIES!

Every day cleaners bend, reach, stretch, lift, drag and carry things to clean up our schools. These actions are wearing on the body. Due to the nature of their jobs, cleaners are at a high risk of sprain and strain type injuries. Cleaners undertake a significant amount of training to ensure they complete their tasks in a safe way—this ranges from using chemicals safely to moving and carrying things safely.

Please help our cleaners (and yourselves!) by remembering a few simple tips

- Don't over fill waste paper or desk bins—remember that we expect small waste paper bins to be light to pick up. Placing heavy books or items in these bins increases the risk of injury for the person emptying the bin due to the posture they are in, repetition of the action and how they 'prepare' for picking up the bin
- Spread heavy loads between wheelie bins— if you have a lot of rubbish that is heavy—share it over a couple of bins—or a couple of days or weeks! Start your clean up early and discard rubbish regularly rather than leaving it all to the last day.
- Some schools place their bins on chairs or desks at the end of each day—saves a bit of bending of the back!

School cleaners should contact their local School Cleaning Advisor if they have any queries about training.

PLAY YOUR PART! Reduce the risk of Dengue Fever

For our northern cousins this is especially important! The dengue mosquito is common in north Queensland. The dengue virus can be easily introduced by dengue-infected visitors to north Queensland from countries where Dengue Fever is widespread. A single infected mosquito can spread Dengue Fever quickly and cause serious illness to you, your family and your community. In the past, some schools have been found to be major breeding sites of the dengue mosquito and therefore steps should be taken to eliminate mosquito breeding sites – especially over the summer holiday period.

Dengue mosquitoes breed in containers that hold water. These include buckets, tarpaulins, drains, discarded tyres, pot plant bases, vases, boats and coconut shells. Roof guttering, rainwater tanks and palm fronds are also potential breeding sites.

Recommendations to control breeding include:

- tipping out containers which can hold water
- storing containers in a dry place
- throwing out rubbish that collects water
- ensuring drains and guttering are free of leaf litter that may hold rain water.

A quick clean-up of these things around your school prior to the summer holidays will assist in mosquito control.

Some excellent resources are available at :
www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/Documents/cphun/8887.pdf
www.health.qld.gov.au/phs/Documents/tphun/19091.pdf

BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES!!

The cyclone season officially commences in November so school communities should consider their cyclone preparedness as we enter the season and how this will be managed over the Christmas break. The following information was prepared by Emergency Management Australia in consultation with state & territory emergency services.

KEEP LISTENING TO YOUR RADIO FOR THE MOST UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CYCLONE OR STORM STATUS.

Before the Cyclone Season

- Clear your site of loose material that could dislodge and cause injury or damage during extreme winds.
- Check with your Facilities Account Manager or local council to see if your structure has been built to cyclone standards.
- Check that walls, roof and eaves are secure.
- Trim treetops and branches well clear of your buildings (get council permission).
- Use masking tape on windows to prevent shattering
- In case of a storm surge/tide warning or other flooding, know your nearest safe high ground and the safest access route to it.

Review your school's plans

- Contact your district office for local plans
- Provide information for parents about school process
- Consider the possibility of your school being an evacuation centre
- http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/council/services/how_to_prepare_for_the_cyclone_season.html

Classes should prepare an emergency kit with:

- a portable battery radio, torch and spare batteries
- water, dried snacks
- a first aid kit and manual, masking tape for windows and waterproof bags.
- Keep a list of emergency phone numbers on display.

For home also prepare

- matches, fuel lamp, portable stove, cooking gear, eating utensils, can opener and water containers
- suitable footwear and wet weather gear and have the car fuelled up in case a general evacuation is called.

For further information for your local area regarding the possibility of your school being an evacuation centre please contact the Counter Disaster Coordinator at your local City or Shire Council Office.

More information at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/>

PREVENTING FIRES OVER THE CHRISTMAS BREAK

'Clean up rags' in industrial technology and maintenance areas can ignite and cause fires—especially over the long hot summer break. Check areas for all rags, wash thoroughly in water (even those to be discarded), air dry and store in a metal container rather than plastic.

For further information check out the **fact sheet** at:
<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/docs/healthsafety/prevent-fires.pdf>



What's on the Safety Net?

The Heat of the Sun

Queenslanders have the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Two out of three Queenslanders can expect to develop some form of skin cancer. Skin cancer is caused by exposure to solar ultra-violet radiation—the heat and light from the sun.

Solar ultra-violet (UV) radiation has a significant impact upon the students at our schools in determining their style of uniform, lunch breaks, outside sport and play times. Staff are also at risk of UV exposure during outside activities. With summer fast approaching now is the time to remember the potential danger of the sun and start planning for a sun safe summer!

The risks associated with skin cancer are directly related to the intensity of exposure to sunlight and the duration of exposure to sunlight. The intensity of exposure depends upon the time of day, extent of reflection, level of shade and season of the year. Because of the risk of cancer – there is no safe level of exposure to UV radiation.

Solar UV rays will reflect up from the water, corrugated iron and aluminium sheeting surfaces. Sun damage can also occur on cloudy overcast days.

Solar UV radiation primarily affects the eyes and skin. Short-term damage to the eyes involves inflammation, swelling and increased sensitivity to light. In the long term the sun can damage the cornea and lens of the eye. Cumulative effects of UV damage to the skin include premature aging, wrinkling and risk of skin cancer.

EQ staff at risk of exposure to UV radiation include Schools Officers, cleaning staff, staff on playground duty, physical education teachers, sporting supervisors, staff on outdoor excursions, car park supervisors etc.

The Queensland Cancer Council recommends **3** tips to avoid overexposure to UV light:

- avoid the sun between 10am-3pm,
- cover up with clothing and a hat and
- apply sunscreen to exposed skin.

Keep in mind when choosing a hat, a dark green colour reduces the amount of UV reflection and penetration to the skin. The **colour under the brim** is also important, a brim lined in white fabric will cause reflection onto exposed skin and eyes.

A closely woven fabric (for hats and clothing) will provide better protection by blocking more UV radiation.

Using natural shade such as trees together with artificial shade such as buildings, sails, tarps and umbrellas can help reduce the level of exposure.

Rescheduling tasks like mowing, painting, cleaning and activities such as sporting events can help avoid direct exposure to UV radiation during the most at risk times.

Remember sun damage and the risk of developing skin cancer is cumulative. The more sunburn over time the greater the risk of developing skin cancer. **PREVENTION IS THE KEY.**

The Cancer Help Line operates from Monday-Friday 8.30-5.00 pm on telephone 131120.



School Safety Scribbles

Update—Basketball Structure Replacement or Modification Program

The Facilities Services Branch have a comprehensive program underway to ensure basketball structures are secure and safe for use.

Stage One involved the visual inspection of basketball structures using a detailed checklist.

Stage Two commenced in August 2004 and involves the testing and structural examination of frames that passed visual inspection or those that are recommended to remain with modification.

Stage Three, replacement and modification of basketball structures, is being managed by Q Build and commenced in August 2004. The Basketball Structure Replacement Program will fund 50 per cent of works undertaken, with the remaining 50 per cent to be provided by schools. The funds will be available until June 30, 2006.

For any information about the program go to:

<http://iwww.qed.qld.gov.au/office/central/fac-serv/basketballstructureprograms1.doc> or phone 3237 0973.

Recording and Reporting Electrical Safety Incidents

It is a legislative requirement to advise either the Electrical Safety Office (ESO) or Workplace Health & Safety Qld (WHSQ) of any 'serious electrical incidents' or 'dangerous electrical incidents'. You must do this within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Contact your local ESO or WSHQ or phone 1300 650 662. A serious electrical incident is when a person is treated by a doctor after receiving a shock or injury or a person is killed by electricity. For more information about dangerous electrical events see sections 11 & 12 of the *Electrical Safety Act 2002* on the CHW website.



What's on the Safety Net?

NEW LEGISLATION!! Preventing Harassment at Work

The *Prevention of Workplace Harassment Advisory Standard 2004* has been released by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland. The Advisory Standard defines workplace harassment and provides practical advice for workplaces on how to prevent workplace harassment.

Workplace Harassment is:

- repeated behaviour
- unwelcome and unsolicited
- person considers behaviour to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening and
- a reasonable person would consider it to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening

Individuals who feel they are subjected to workplace harassment should try to address the issue :

- Seek support—discuss the issue with someone
- Information resolution—talking it over
- Report and record incidents—WHS Incident Report
- Mediation—can be organised through your school
- Access grievance processes—formal or informal

The advisory standard can be found at:

<http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/advisory/adv030.pdf>

Confidential counselling services are available through The Employee Assistance Service

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/employee/>

Planning Winter Flu Vaccinations in the Sizzling Heat of Summer - Are we Crazy?!

The Organisational Health Unit is currently identifying potential providers of Flu vaccinations for school and other departmental staff. We hope to have a list of preferred providers by the end of this year who can offer a competitive price and vaccinate at times convenient for schools and other staff.

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommend that Flu vaccinations be given during February to May for best preparation before winter. If your school intends participating in a Flu vaccination program, then now would be a good time to start identifying who wants the jab!

Remember that your principal or manager needs to approve and fund the program. We suggest that you budget for around \$20 - \$25 per head in your calculations for the costs of the vaccinations. We hope to achieve cheaper prices than this, but use these figures as a guide for the time being.

Of course you are still at liberty to use your own local Flu vaccination arrangements if these suit you better than the services that the preferred providers can offer.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

The Asbestos Advisory Standard 2004

<http://www.whs.qld.gov.au/advisory/adv029.pdf>

Managing Asbestos Safely—School Safety Alert

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/pdfs/healthsafety/asbestos-alert.pdf>

Manual Handling of Students Resource Package

- Available in CD version—contact your local Health & Safety Consultant or janet.edgar@qed.qld.gov.au
- Or under “Resources” at
- <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/healthsafety/hs-mod-manual.html>

Portable Fire Extinguishers Video

- Available from the AccessEd Professional Collection
- Useful for fire safety training

To find out how to register, view the catalogue and borrow items from the Professional Collection please go to :

<http://education.qld.gov.au/information/service/>

Welcome !

The Organisational Health Unit (OHU) was pleased to welcome Chris Loos in August this year. Chris is undertaking the role of Manager, OHU and oversees the Health and Safety, Rehabilitation and Employee Assistance teams. Chris brings with her a wealth of experience in human resource issues after working in the role of Principal Personnel Officer in the Murrumba District for the past 2½ years. Previously, Chris has also worked as an Employee Advisor (EA) in eight districts across the state. The majority of her EA experience has been working with employees in the Townsville, Mount Isa, Longreach, Geebung and Murrumba Districts.

Current initiatives that Chris is helping OHU to progress include:

- production and dissemination of organisational health performance data
- development of the Organisational Health Strategic Plan
- development of an accountability framework for Organisational Health issues
- implementation of a DIR Pilot focusing on the development of People Management skills and
- implementation of the WORC Project, a health & wellness survey designed by the World Health Organisation. A number of large government and private organisations throughout Australia are participating in the project.

