



GN GUIDELINES

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Tackling occupational health and safety

The most important reason for workplace health and safety, is not at work at all..."

That's been the message on a number of television advertisements shown on Australian screens over the last few years.

I believe these advertisements are exceptionally clever, because they raise the issue of workplace health and safety (WPH&S) for both the employee and employer.

For the employee, it makes the issue very personal, because at the end of the day it's their life that is on the line. For the employer, the ads imply that a duty of care is expected from them by their work force, but also by the wider community.

Check out the ads on YouTube if you haven't seen them, under the search 'WorkSafe Victoria Classics'.

For the average employer, WPH&S is not always at the top of the list when it comes to business priorities. It usually takes a 'trigger event' for WPH&S standards to be reviewed.

A few years ago, there was an incident in a truss plant where an employee suffered a badly broken thumb after getting it jammed in a machine. Fortunately, it wasn't too severe and the thumb did heal completely.

Following the incident, WorkSafe came into the truss plant to review the situation, determine the cause, work out who was at fault, and outline a solution.

Once the safety issue was identified and fixed, a fine was issued to cover the costs associated with the incident. The whole exercise was expensive, and this business owner still reminds me that this little incident, cost him big.

This incident was a trigger event, and went on to raise several key questions for this truss plant owner, including;

1. How many other hazards are in my workplace?

2. How do I identify them?
3. What can I do to fix them?

For any truss plant asking these questions, there is plenty of help available. WorkSafe, or any third party company who specialises in WPH&S, are ideal organisations to assist a business safeguard their processes. Whoever is chosen to help out, the process is often similar.

It involves looking at each workstation (any location where work is undertaken) and identifying hazards that an employee may be subject to. Once a hazard is identified, a change is required to reduce or remove the hazard. So, by doing this, we have already (hypothetically) answered questions one and two, fantastic!

However, when we get to question three (meaning changes need to be enforced), what does that change look like? What will it mean? And are there any rules that need to be followed?

The good news is that, yes, there are standards available for you that outline a range of techniques in order to reduce or remove hazards. In a truss plant, some of the biggest hazards are the machines around you, and the standard specifically written for these machines is AS4024.1 – *Safeguarding Machinery Set*.

So why am I telling you this? I'm not expecting every truss plant owner to go and purchase this standards document. It's complex, and requires experience to interpret it correctly.

However, your nailplate supplier will have quite a bit of experience working with this standard, so if you have a problem with machine safety that needs to be fixed, your supplier is a great starting point.

They can help you determine whether your machine needs a simple guard, or if it needs a safety laser scanner with a



category four-rated safety electrical architecture (don't worry if you don't know what that means – that's what your nailplate supplier is there for!).

Once a change has been made, you're on the way to improving overall workplace health and safety!

Our industry, the truss and frame industry, is quite a dangerous one – so I encourage all truss plant owners to take up the call to improve workplace health and safety in your factory, whenever and wherever you can.

Make sure you talk to the relevant authorities, and see how they can help. And remember, when you get to the point of making a change to your machinery – please give your nailplate supplier a call first.

I hope this article can be your trigger event that will lead to you improving your own workplace health and safety standards, and not an accident to one of your staff. **T**

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