

## Workplace Safety (Harmonised legislation terminology).

### *I wish that I had put a safety system in place.*

It was Friday morning, I was going to knock off early at 2pm and head to my mates shack for a weekend of fishing and a few drinks. I had taken the unwanted gear out of the ute so I could pack and get on the road straight away.

I work for myself with a labourer and last week I took on a 17 year old casual for a few days, to help with some carrying of gear and equipment down a laneway for the renovation I am doing.

I thought about a Construction Site Warning Sign but as it was down a lane I thought we were well and truly out of sight and pretty secure.

But anyway the young casual got a bruise and a few stitches and I thought it was actually pretty minor. However, When the WorkSafe Inspector called I wished that I had put a safety system in place. I could have shown him all the 'safe' things I do, but all I had was my hope to get him to believe that I was careful with safety.

The incident that happened wasn't all my fault (which sounds like my lame excuses for not doing my homework) what happened was a bit unlucky (Another lame excuse, I am digging myself a bigger hole).

I said 'Look I have all the personal protection equipment I need. It's all there. See I can show you.' The WorkSafe Inspector looked bored with my responses and simply said 'Is there anything else you want to say or show me before I ask you some questions?'

I said that I had never had an accident and had attended a number of safety information sessions as I know safety at work is important.....(as I was talking I realised I was digging another hole as the WorkSafe Inspector's eyes looked at me with....'Well you should have known better' look!)

The WorkSafe Inspector gave me his card and said that there were a number of high risk activities which require compliance with the Codes of Practice. I need to

have a Safe Work Method Statement completed explaining how these activities are to be undertaken safely, and everyone on the site needs to sign onto it.

He went on to say that 'As I had no onsite risk documents, did I have a safety system? 'No' 'Did I have a written induction page signed by my two workers?' I said 'No - but one was only a casual for a few days.' The WorkSafe Inspector said I should be aware that new people on site are at much greater risk in the first few works of an accident. Ouch clobbered again.

The WorkSafe Inspector said that he would need to interview me and my two workers, take statements and pass the information to the review panel for its decision on any action to be taken.

In the meantime you have to cease work until I had a completed Safe Work Method Statement in place and could show in the Safety documentation that I had considered all the risks, amended my induction so you can set the standards for safety that I needed.

He went on to say that I may also face a fine for not reporting an incident. I was stunned. He went to leave and I had to ask. 'How could I be in so much trouble over a small incident?'

The WorkSafe Inspector said my new worker may have only suffered a cut and some stiches and should be fine, however because the pinch bar that fell from the scaffold him did not cause a major injury, that was not the point. He could have been killed. I had nothing to show that I had advised him of how to stack the bricks safely, no safety policy, no induction and no idea that I have to report serious incidents that could have killed him.

I asked 'What do you think will happen to me?' The WorkSafe Inspector said 'Can't say really? Maybe a caution, maybe an undertaking, maybe a fine and keep in mind you can go to prison if it was found that you were seriously negligent. I guess you will have to wait until the review panel decides. In the meantime start to get all the safety documents in place BEFORE you start work again'.

I really should have got this sorted earlier.

*Written by Neil Johnston - Small Business Safety Systems to explain the all too common practices on jobsites.*