



IN BRIEF



pic: stockxpert

Vic challenge

With the 2009 bushfire less than three months away, Victoria's Country Fire Authority is yet to implement a UFU /CFA Board of Reference decision. "The CFA agreed to employ more firefighters," says Peter Marshall. "But the volunteer organisation's leadership has lobbied to stop recruitment."



pic: stock.xchng

Brake hose alert

The Union's OH&S coordinators are concerned about the safety of vehicle brake hoses. To cut costs, there is a move to install nylon hoses that can be affected by heat — and fail.



Carpet call

The Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union is calling for compulsory asbestos inspections in houses after revelations that it has been used in carpet underlay. Deadly asbestos fibres can be released into the air when burnt or during structural collapse.

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Hot work! Aviation Branch firefighters take on sandbagging as part of a heat stress-testing study in Darwin. Find out the results in the next edition of the Australian Firefighter Magazine.

Harmony threat

Moves by federal and state governments for uniform OHS laws threaten workplace safety standards with a lowest common denominator solution

Three months ago, the states and Commonwealth agreed to a framework for nationwide occupational health and safety laws. "A draft of these proposals has set off alarm bells through the Union movement," says UFUA National Secretary, Peter Marshall. "Under the guise of 'harmonisation', workplace safety standards in states and territories are under threat."

In a number of states, the proposed national laws would weaken workers' rights to attend safety training, put restrictions on the issuing of provisional improvement notices (PINs) and cease-work directions, put

clamps on the right to ask for assistance and resolution procedures, as well as restrict the role of OHS reps.

"As they stand, the draft national laws are not good enough," says Peter Marshall. "Currently, there are nine sets of OH&S laws operating across Australia, so it would be helpful to streamline these and establish a single OHS system. However, we don't want new laws that enshrine the lowest standards from each state and territory jurisdiction."

Annual work related deaths and disease fatalities in Australia are four times the national road toll.

RALLY FOR WORK SAFETY

"The proposed 'harmonised' OHS laws threaten hard fought gains," says Peter Marshall. "In NSW, Unions stand to lose the right to prosecute breaches of OHS law. Other states would also see a reverse of the onus of proof — back onto the worker — in OHS prosecutions." "Not good enough" is the message to be delivered to the Federal and State Governments when

Australian workers take part in a national day of action to protect and improve workplace health and safety standards.

"I think there will be a very big turn out to these rallies in September," says Peter Marshall. "Firefighters are only too aware of the workplace dangers — they want protection strengthened, not watered down."