

11 December, 2009

Victorian Fatalities 2009

Victoria is facing a horror end of 2009 with the deaths of three workers in the past 18 days.

A 24-year-old man died at Rutherglen after being hit by the attachment on a hose belonging to a concrete pump while a 21-year-old who suffered an electric shock at Stawell later died in hospital.

WorkSafe investigators understand the concrete pump was being cleaned after a pour at a farm in Rutherglen-Springhurst Road. The 21-year-old man from western Victoria died in the Royal Melbourne Hospital after suffering an electric shock while working in a trench at the Stawell racecourse.

The director of WorkSafe's Construction and Utilities Division, Chris Webb, said the two deaths and the electrocution of a man standing next to a tip-truck which hit power lines in South Gippsland on the 5th was a wake-up call to every Victorian employer and worker.

Christmas is in the most dangerous time of the year. In many industries there is a bottleneck of activity leading up to Christmas and any shortfall in safety can have devastating consequences not just for the individual, but everyone around them.

While the number of work-related injuries in Victoria is at a record low level, anyone involved in high-risk industries must go the extra mile to ensure their workplaces are as safe as possible. Taking the time to plan work, understand the hazards and work in a safe way might take longer, but the risk will be greatly reduced.

Employers need to be setting the example, ensure people know what they are to do and exercise control of their sites. While there is no single factor connecting any of these incidents, every one of them had readily identifiable causes. There is no room for complacency or shortcuts.

Victoria has had a bleak fatality toll since 1 October with 12 deaths. There have been four in construction, four in farming and two each in the transport & services industries. Eight of the 11 deaths since 1 October have happened in regional areas.

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Farming has returned to its position of Victoria's most dangerous industry in 2009 recording nine of the 30 work related deaths so far this year.

The most recent death happened on Tuesday at Warragul in West Gippsland when a 63-year-old man operating a slasher was run over and died. Just over two weeks ago, at a market garden at Werribee South, a farm worker was run over and died when he was hit by a reversing tractor and trailer.

WorkSafe's Executive Director, John Merritt, said with good rain in many parts of the state, harvesting underway, haymaking and general cleaning-up ahead of the fire season, there is enormous pressure to get work done.

The fact that farmers, farm workers and people, often children, helping accounts for nearly one-third of all Victorian work-related deaths in 2009, should alarm the rural community. It is possible to reduce farm deaths, it's been done before, but it requires a community effort.

Source: Victorian WorkCover Authority

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