



## Workers get gunned down

“Bumpfire” may be convenient, but is it worth being crucified?

**Nail guns have become a workplace nightmare as injuries rise from the unsafe use of these tools.**

Workers are inflicting self-injury with these guns, particularly when they are adjusted to "bumpfire". This is a popular setting where the trigger is depressed to allow a constant flow of nails - you only need to place the gun against an object for it to fire. People use their guns like this because it saves time.

Employers must ensure the safety of their workers by keeping the nail gun safe and not allowing the use of the 'bumpfire' setting. There should also be regular nail gun checks to make sure all guns are in a suitable working condition.

WorkSafe Victoria has released an official warning on nail guns after a 17 year old man shot himself in the abdomen with a 7cm nail. This was similar to the case of a 19 year old man from Queensland who shot himself in the chest last year.

Most nail gun injuries occur with young inexperienced workers who use the nail gun on "bumpfire". WorkSafe has stressed it is the employers' responsibility to make sure young workers use nail guns in a safe manner.

*Image: www.thisoldhouse.com - original source unknown. Copyright information unavailable.*



### A battle that should be over

**Maxima are proud to be involved in an all female pre-occupational construction course running with the Construction Skills Training Centre (CSTC) and schools within Queensland.**

The course gives young women a chance to become a part of a diverse construction industry - an industry that is still very much male dominated.

A 2007 review of female participation rates in the Queensland construction industry over the preceding 20 years yielded disappointing results, with women comprising only 0.84% of the workforce compared to 0.43% in 1987. When viewed as an overall trend, participation of women in the Queensland construction workforce had not grown significantly in 20 years.

The precise cause for this is unclear, however a 1996 survey by the (NSW) Building Careers Centre suggested the highly male makeup of the industry is a deterrent to women who fear isolation, discrimination and harassment should they pursue construction industry careers.

The survey, which was conducted amongst school leavers and their families, also found that:

- > Despite paying lip service to the notion that 'women can do anything', many young men still believe women are both physically and psychologically unsuited to construction work.
- > Most respondents said they would not encourage their daughter to enter the industry, although many would encourage their sons to do so.

## Water's not that scarce yet

It is time for workers to stop and think not only about applying sunscreen and wearing sun protective clothes, but also about hydration.

In Australia we hear a lot about workers getting sunburnt on the job, which is why the slip, slop, slap rule has been driven into us for years. Avoiding the sun's rays seems to be the focus of workers' protection during the warmer months but a hidden and often neglected threat is dehydration.

Becoming dehydrated is just as easy as getting burnt and it's not just outside workers who suffer.

A study has found that during hot weather many **indoor workers** also experience dehydration as office and factory air-conditioning strips the body of moisture.

It is simple to avoid dehydration by drinking at least two litres of water daily. Be aware that sugar based beverages or alcohol are not a substitute - these drinks tend to add to dehydration rather than provide relief.



*Photo by Foolish. No copyright information cited. <http://newopticalillusions.blogspot.com>*

## ....just the facts, not the sermon

**Workers under the age of 25 are 21% more likely to sustain an injury at work than their older counterparts and injuries are usually due to being unable to perform duties correctly - often because of lack of training or experience - but the effects of the "night before" can also play a part.**

'Binge drinking' has frequently been discussed in the media over the last twelve months, however there is little agreement about what the term means.

John Eyre, from the Alcohol Related Brain Injury Australian Services, suggests that "binge drinking is consuming a whole heap of alcohol ....and getting yourself into a state where you're not in control." The National Health and Medical Research Council suggests the stricter definition of the equivalent of four beers - with a usual daily limit of two.

Although Mr. Eyres doesn't agree with that definition, he says drinking four drinks a day over an extended period of time is risky.

"It will over time cause ... an acquired brain injury and the younger you are ...

especially if you're under 25 years old, the ... higher risk you have."

Binge drinkers have been found more likely to cause themselves an injury at work. Hangovers and work do not mix as workers become more physically and mentally incapable of performing set tasks.

Drinking slows down the brain so workers who drink excessive amounts of alcohol have a slower reaction time. Slower reaction times can turn avoidable hazards into accidents.

So some suggestions:

- > Drink sensibly or stop drinking altogether before working days.
- > Stay home if you have a hangover - it's better to loose a day's pay than a limb.
- > If you're feeling sick at work it's best to leave.

Not only can binge drinkers cause themselves an injury but they can also injure other workers around them.

*Sources: WorkSafe Vic. and the ABC's "PM" radio programme, Monday, 16 June, 2008 18:21:00*

## Avoid awkward stretching and remember your training

Strains have been the most common type of injury amongst Maxima employees over the last six months and most of these injuries have involved workers bending or reaching to lift objects. Sometimes strains just happen or damage can build up over time, but you can minimise the risk by remembering your training - and when there is no alternative to lifting, use the correct techniques.

If you're office based, place heavier items at convenient heights and arrange items on your desk in a way that reduces the need to stretch awkwardly.



*Photo: Jonathon Nosan, Contortionist. <http://www.acrobac.com>*

Most of the people who have been injured are Horticulture and Land Management trainees - so a particular reminder to assess the risk and think about the task *before* you start.

The next most common injuries have been sprains as a result of slipping and working on uneven surfaces. These injuries have occurred in Horticulture, Business and Civil Construction.

Most of these injuries are preventable and come down to:

- > Assessing the risks: Check your worksite or office for any hazards and report these to your supervisor or if it's a simple question of good housekeeping - tidy up the area!
- > Outdoor workers should ensure they are wearing appropriate footwear and take greater care on loose or wet surfaces. This is particularly important if you're involved in any manual handling task.

**The summer edition of MaxSafety will be published in early 2010, so...**

**have a merry christmas and a happy new year**

**...and above all, keep safe.**