



December 2006 – January 2007



Introduction

Congratulations on joining the PubOHS program! We've had an overwhelming response and look forward to providing you with useful OHS information and support to help you improve the safety of your workplace.

For those of you who are interested in brushing up your OHS skills,

subsidised training courses throughout regional NSW are now underway. Spaces are filling fast, so if you see a suitable course in your area, contact us at pubohs@ahasmartohs.com.au today!

Also, in this issue of PubOHS we're bringing you 'Pub in Progress'. This exciting new segment tracks the progress of the Commercial Hotel - a small, country pub located in Broadwater, NSW. Like many, this hotel operates on a budget and licensee, Mathew Flint, struggles to find the time to implement a comprehensive OHS Management system.

We look forward to working with Mathew and

his staff, and commend their enthusiasm and commitment to improving OHS procedures at the Commercial Hotel.

Finally, don't forget to log on to the PubOHS Online Discussion Board (see page 6 for details) and post any OHS issues or questions you may have. This is a great way to interact with other pubs in your area or throughout the State and learn from each other's experiences.

Regards,

Brian Ross
Chief Executive
AHA (NSW)



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Bird Flu

Why you need to be PREPARED

We've all heard of 'bird flu'. However, many employers have a limited knowledge of the

disease, the impact of a possible bird flu pandemic, and their responsibilities under the OHS Act. So, what is bird flu and how can we prepare for it?

Bird flu or avian influenza is a virus that is infectious among birds. Dr. Joseph Nicholas, a GP and Director of BirdFluReady, explains, "At the moment, it's easily caught in a market place, from eating or contacting uncooked or poorly cooked food, or contact with a bird that's unwell."

However, he goes on to say, "What the virus hasn't done yet, is show any strength to spread from human to human that we're certain of." Should bird flu mutate so that it is easily transmitted between humans, the virus could rapidly become a worldwide pandemic given that humans have no previous exposure to the strain and therefore, little immunity.

Under the OHS Act, employers are required to take all reasonably practical steps to protect the health and safety of their workers while they are at work. The risk of an influenza pandemic is recognised as **reasonably foreseeable** and, as such, **employers have a duty of care to plan and prepare for potential workplace exposure to bird flu.**

In order to do this, Dr. Nicholas says, "We first need to understand the virus and how it behaves. Then we need to put in place simple measures to reduce the risk of an infection and the spread of an infection should an outbreak occur."

How can we PREPARE for a bird flu pandemic?

"Each hotel needs to have its own response plan and business continuity plan in place", says Dr. Nicholas.

The Australian Government Comcare website recommends the following OHS practice when planning for a pandemic:

1) Keep informed and up-to-date on pandemic information.

2) Educate and keep employees up to date.

3) Undertake OHS risk management by:

a) **Managing the direct risks.** Workplace measures should be in place to contain virus transmission such as social distancing (reducing physical contact and proximity between staff and patrons), good hygiene and the use of personal protective equipment, an effective air conditioning system, and controlling entry into the workplace.

b) **Managing the indirect risks.** Examples include anxiety among staff, unfamiliar work and higher workloads, and employees not being informed on the pandemic situation or changed work arrangements.

4) Incorporate OHS preparations and risk control measures into a Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

A BCP is a contingency plan to manage the business risk of a particular event and should include: the identification of essential business activities (core people and skills to keep them running); the identification of infrastructure and resources required to continue operations at a minimum acceptable level; mitigation strategies for business/economic disruptions (e.g. shortages of supplies); ensuring employees, customers and suppliers are aware of the contingency arrangements and how they work; and minimizing the illness of workers.

5) Review and evaluate risk control measures.

For instance, try practicing social distancing techniques in your workplace and evaluate how well they work.

6) Plan and manage the recovery phase.

This is the process of normalising work activities and relies heavily on effective communication between management and staff.

What are the symptoms of bird flu?

"An infected person can be shedding the live virus before they show any physical symptoms at all", warns Dr. Nicholas. In fact, it can take up to three days to see any of the early symptoms, which include:

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Headache
- Muscle aches and pains

By the time sufferers are displaying these symptoms, they are highly infectious.

So, how real is the risk to your workplace of an influenza pandemic?

We cannot predict the future, but we can look back through history. Dr. Nicholas says, “We have one of these things about three times a century. In the 20th Century we had the Spanish flu in 1918 that killed half the world’s population. Then in 1958 the Asian flu hit, followed by the Hong Kong flu in 1967.”

However, preparation and the ability to manage the OHS risks associated with an influenza pandemic can dramatically reduce the potential impact of the disease.

BirdFluReady is an organisation set up to provide businesses with the information, resources and equipment that will help protect a workplace from the risk of an influenza pandemic. For further information, please contact:

BirdFluReady
Phone: 1300 853 477
Fax: 1300 856 077

Source: BirdFluReady; Australian Government Comcare; Department of Industry; Tourism and Resources; World Health Organization.



Pub in Progress – The Commercial Hotel, Broadwater

As part of ‘Pub in Progress’ we will be providing support and tracking the progress of the team at The Commercial Hotel, Broadwater as they work towards improving OHS procedures in their hotel. Broadwater is located at near Ballina in NSW and the hotel employs 10 staff.

Mathew Flint is the licensee at The Commercial Hotel and says that “up until two years ago when the pub changed ownership and I became the licensee, OHS policies and procedures didn’t even exist in this pub.”

Since then, Mathew has made significant OHS improvements saying, “We’ve got all our safety signs displayed, matting on all the floors and we’ve installed ramps for where we move stock.”

However, at present, Mathew and his team are relying on a common sense approach to avoid injury and are not conducting and recording regular inspections of their workplace.

The Goal: To implement regular workplace inspections, record the outcomes, and action required tasks.

The Issue: Mathew and his staff don’t have time to create a suitable workplace inspection form that will tell them what tasks are required to be completed and when.

PubOHS Recommendation:

- 1) Attend Upcoming Courses to increase OHS knowledge.
- 2) Sign up The Commercial Hotel for a free, three month trial membership to AHA (NSW) Smart OHS - an Online OHS Management System at www.ahasmartohs.com.au

How it works: The AHA (NSW) Smart OHS System will send an email reminder to Mathew when a workplace inspection is due. Mathew can then log into the system to access a generic workplace inspection form to complete.

Should an item on the inspection form require a task to be completed (e.g. replace bar floor mat), the task is diarised with the due date determined by the urgency of the task. Mathew will be sent an email reminder when that task falls due.

If Mathew needs to purchase any safety equipment, he can do this directly from www.ahasmartohs.com.au

Desired Outcome: Mathew performs and records workplace inspections as and when required, and actions any tasks within acceptable timeframes.

We look forward to an update in the next issue of PubOHS. Good luck!

Spa Pools – Are you aware of the DANGERS?

Tragic deaths like that of 13 year old, Amanda Boyce, after her hair was sucked into and tangled in the intake valve of a spa pool, are a stark reminder of how dangerous spa pools can be.

A recent inquest into the Boyce accident has shifted the focus away from the fencing and chemical requirements of public spas, to their constructional specifications and the obligations of spa pool operators. This includes hotels with spas on the premises.

It was on 10 December 2001, while holidaying with friends at the Seahaven Resort at Noosa Heads, that Amanda Boyce became trapped underwater in the spa after her long hair was sucked into the intake valve. Her hair had to be cut free and it is estimated it took between seven and ten minutes to pull her body from the spa. Although revived at the scene, she suffered brain damage and died from pneumonia five days later.

Following an inspection of the spa, a workplace health and safety report concluded that several features did NOT to meet Australian Standards. These included:

- A lack of proper signage setting out safety rules
- No emergency stop button
- The installation of an oversized pump
- The excessive velocity of suction

So what are the obligations of spa pool operators?

There are currently two Australian Standards that are relevant to the operators of public spas:

- AS 2610.1 – 1993, Spa Pools Part 1: Public Spas; and
- AS/NZS 3136 – 2001, Approval and test specification – Electrical equipment for spa and swimming pools.

Spa pool operators should also be aware of:

- AS 1926 set-2005: Swimming Pool Safety Set which includes fencing for swimming pools, locations of fencing for private swimming pools and water recirculation and filtration systems;
- AS 3861 – 1991, Spa Baths; and
- AS 3979 – 2006, Hydrotherapy pools.

Responsibility for ensuring that all necessary steps are taken to protect the users of spa pools rests with the spa pool operator. Therefore, it is imperative that spa pool operators are familiar with the standards listed above, and alert themselves to the risk of entrapment or any other hazards associated with spa pools.

In an effort to prevent tragic accidents like that of Amanda Boyce, the Department of Industrial Relations, Workplace Health and Safety (Qld), has released several recommendations that are relevant to spa operators across Australia. These include:

- Advise users against placing one's head below water;
- Ensure water velocities, outlet systems, outlet point covers and drain covers comply with AS 1926.3;
- Measure pipe velocities immediately after installation and at regular intervals;
- Regularly check for obstruction of pipes;
- Install an emergency stop switch controlling all spa pool pumps, blowers and heaters in the vicinity of the spa pool area, in accordance with AS 2610.1;
- Install an alarm device so that on activation of the emergency stop switch, the alarm device sounds continuously and is audible in the main public area of the building in which the spa pool is situated, as specified in AS 2610.1;
- Ensure depth markings, points of exit and entry, surface edges and protrusions, and signage and display of safety rules are in accordance with AS 2610.1;
- Engage suitably trained individuals to perform the work listed above.

Most importantly, the obligation is on spa pool operators to ensure their equipment is safe. So have the safety of your spa pool checked TODAY.

Source: *Workplace Health and Safety (Qld), Ebsworth & Ebsworth Lawyers, Australian Standards*



Pub in Profile – The Merimbula Lakeview Hotel

Lesley Mutsch has been the Manager at the Merimbula Lakeview Hotel for the just over two years. She oversees approximately 16 employees during winter and this number doubles over the summer months.

What is your general attitude towards OHS?

I think it's very important. Staff education and safety are a priority.

Do you have an OHS management system in place?

Yes. We purchased a paper based filing system last year.

What key OHS improvements have been made at The Merimbula Lakeview Hotel over the last 6-12 months?

Safety in the bar would be our biggest improvement. The bar area didn't have any safety mats and it had poor storage which did cause some potential OHS hazards.

We've since implemented safety mats and cleared out the area to improve the overall safety of the bar.

Do you find staff to be cooperative when it comes to following OHS issues?

We have a staff manual which explains the correct procedures to follow when performing their duties, such as lifting boxes. I find my staff very happy to comply with these.

We haven't really had any big OHS issues to deal with as yet. However, knowing my staff, they'd be pretty conscientious about it.

How do you communicate OHS issues to other staff members?

Usually I use memos. We have a memo folder which everyone has to read. If it's something that I think is particularly important, I make sure I explain it to all staff during that week.

What would make job easier with regard to OHS?

More staff training. We're on the far south coast and because of the distance most courses just aren't accessible to us.

Thanks for your insights, Lesley!



Product of the Month – Anti-Fatigue Floor Mats

WHY? Staff who stand on their feet all day, especially in wet areas, need a surface that is comfortable and slip resistant - ideal for behind the bar and/or in bistro kitchens and restaurants.

Colour: Black or Terracotta

Description: This mat is manufactured from a non slip rubber compound and has drainage holes which prevent liquid build up. Each mat measures 900mm x 1500mm and will ensure employee comfort day and night.

Price: \$119.90 per mat incl GST

Purchase Now: www.ahasmartohs.com.au/OnlineShop/Flooringantislipssurfacesandmats.aspx



Legislation Updates

WorkCover NSW Scheme in Surplus: Benefits Up, Premiums Down!

The latest independent valuation of the WorkCover NSW Scheme shows a \$1.247billion improvement in the last six months due largely to improved claims management resulting in a modest surplus of \$85m. The NSW Government is passing these significant improvements directly back to NSW employers and workers.

To further support the State's most seriously injured workers, compensation for permanent impairment injuries will increase by 10 percent to a maximum of \$231,000 for injuries incurred from 1 January 2007.

NSW businesses will also benefit from a further five per cent (\$130m) reduction on their workers compensation premium rates. This ongoing improvement in the Scheme's performance has enabled the NSW Government to provide a 20 per cent rate reduction (\$560m) since November 2005.

A five percent reduction was effective for policies commencing on or after 31 December 2005. This was followed by a further ten per cent reduction, effective for policies commencing on or after 30 June 2006 and a further five per cent premium rate reduction effective for policies commencing on or after 31 December 2006. The reductions apply to all WorkCover NSW Industry Classification (WIC) Rates.

The average premium rate paid by employers in NSW has also reduced to 2.06%, down from 2.57% in 2005.

Effective 31 December 2006, apprentice wages will not be used to assess an employer's workers compensation premium.

The reduction has been delivered by the Government's workers compensation reform program and the sustained improvement in the overall performance of the WorkCover NSW Scheme.

Source: WorkCover NSW

Do you have an OHS issue to discuss?

To register visit <http://www.groups.edna.edu.au>
You can then access the Online Discussion Board by visiting <http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=890> and inputting "aha" as the invitation key.

Latest News

No Hotels Prosecuted Over Smoking Bans

Health inspectors have not prosecuted any hotels for breaching the NSW government's partial smoking ban despite more than 400 complaints.

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act also show the powerful hotel lobby tried to have smoking bans pushed back until 2009 and a one year "period of grace" allowed before fines were imposed, The Sydney Morning Herald reports.

One hotelier has broken ranks to write to Frank Sartor, the Minister for Health (Cancer), to tell him many of her colleagues were not obeying the laws, the documents show.

Tricia Cooper, licensee of the Bird in Hand Inn in Pitt Town, sent the letter in March complaining that the attitude during meetings of licensees was "no one is being breached so why bother!"

Not one prosecution has been pursued by health inspectors since a ban was introduced in July last year allowing smoking in only 50 per cent of the total premises.

In July this year the smoking area was reduced to 25 per cent.

Mr. Sartor said the government was about to move from "education to compliance" with a blitz on pubs and clubs and prosecutions would begin soon.

"Based on complaints and inspections, only two per cent of the state's 5,500 venues have not fully complied with new smoking regulations ... and have been warned to lift their game," he told the newspaper.

But the newspaper's survey of 16 city pubs found almost half were breaching the new laws.

Source: 2006 AAP New

Upcoming Courses

Risk Management - Two-day course for Managers - \$200pp (normally \$350pp)

20th & 21st Feb 2007 Armidale

27th & 28th Feb 2007 Goulburn & District

21st & 22nd Mar 2007 Orange/Central West

16th & 17th Apr 2007 Maitland/Hunter Valley

21st & 22nd May 2007 Wagga & District

Manual Handling - 4-hour course for staff involved in cellar work, lifting etc - \$50pp (normally \$90pp)

18th Apr 2007 Maitland/Hunter Valley

23rd May 2007 Wagga & District

OHS Consultation - Four-day course for OHS Reps - \$300pp (normally \$440pp)

6th, 7th, 8th & 9th Mar 2007 Goulburn & District

These courses are part of the PubOHS subsidised regional training program available to members throughout NSW.

To register for training please contact PubOHS on 02 9357 6544 or email pubohs@ahasmartohs.com.au
You can also download the subsidised training booking form here: www.vision6.com.au/download/files/07717/227882/Subsidised_Training_Booking_Form.pdf

For more courses please contact the AHA (NSW) Training Department on 1800 100 047 or visit the AHA (NSW) Training Calendar:

http://www.ahansw.com.au/FileLibrary/Documents/AHA%20Training_calendar_2006.pdf