

SAFE WORK OCTOBER

October is National Safe Work Month. Master Builders director Michael McLean explains the significance of safety to the building industry.

EVERY year more than 250 Australians die as a result of work related injuries and over 135,000 are seriously injured.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act, which has been in existence for 30 years, is the legislation that governs safety in Western Australia. The McGowan Government intends to review this legislation and update it in line with most other states by 2019.

Consultations with industry groups like Master Builders will ensure the new legislation is workable and reasonable.

Having a whole month dedicated to safety enables workplaces to really focus on safety and think about why safety and health are important to everyone.

Before anyone starts any form of 'construction work' on a housing or building site, they are required to undertake a 4-5 hour safety awareness training course.

The best form of delivering this course is face-to-face, however online delivery has become more convenient and popular in recent times. The satisfactory completion of this introductory course will result in the attendees being issued with a 'white card'.

Although this 'white card' only provides workers with a general awareness of what to look out for on building sites, it does provide information on important matters such as protective clothing and footwear, safety signage, working at heights, electrical power cords, manual handling, working around mobile plant and explosive power tools.

Evacuation procedures, drug and alcohol testing, basic first aid, site amenities and reporting accidents are also covered in the training course.

Master Builders provides this and other safety training to builders, subcontractors,

apprentices, suppliers, office-based staff members and work experience students on a regular basis. We also provide site safety audits, safety management plans and offer a category in our Housing Excellence Awards to recognise those builders who have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to safety in their business. Ventura Homes won this award last year.

Builders and tradies undergo a lot of specialised safety training depending on their responsibilities onsite. Some jobs require a special licence if they involve 'high risk' occupations such as riggers, scaffolders and crane drivers.

Master Builders and the Industrial Foundation of Accident Prevention (IFAP) have formed an alliance to boost the range of safety services and training we can collectively provide to our respective members. Contact Jess Sethi or Carolyn Fitzgerald on 9476 9800 for details.

Although builders are ultimately responsible for safety standards and practices on their housing sites, safety is everyone's business.

Regardless of how experienced you are, you should never become complacent or take short cuts when it comes to safety, especially on building sites. The consequences could be life-changing and potentially fatal.

With all the obligations attached to occupational health and safety, it is yet another reason not to risk being an owner builder. Check out the WorkSafe website at www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe for more information about safety.

Homeowners should be particularly wary when renovating older homes of the dangers of asbestos.

