

WORLD DAY FOR SAFETY AND HEALTH AT WORK

Yesterday was World Day for Safety and Health at Work. Master Builders director Michael McLean reports on the importance of occupational health and safety in the housing industry.

WORLD Day for Safety and Health at Work helps to raise awareness about the importance of safety and health in all workplaces, and also honours those who have died from work-related injury or illness. This year, the focus was on young workers and future generations.

Young workers, including trainees and apprentices, have an increased risk of workplace injury due to their lack of experience, maturity and awareness of the risks associated with some jobs.

The best way to help create a safe and healthy working environment for young workers is to firstly train them well to carry out the job safely, and secondly to empower them to have the confidence to speak up about any concerns they have about their job such as unsafe work practices.

Anyone who works in a construction-related job in the housing industry realises that there are a number of risks and hazards involved. These risks and hazards vary according to the job you are performing but in each case ongoing vigilance and awareness of what you are doing will help to prevent accidents and injury.

In building a new home, there are hundreds of tasks that need to be carried out in completing the construction project. Each of these tasks have their own risks associated with them such as:

- Working with electrical power tools to cut building materials or fix things to walls.
- Manual handling of heavy building materials.
- Mixing substances on-site which might have obnoxious fumes or blow dust in your eyes.
- Traffic movements through mobile plant such as excavators, bobcats, backhoes, forklifts, cranes or truck deliveries.
- Working at height on the roof, on a scaffold, from a ladder or an elevated work platform.
- Working around uneven surfaces, penetrations in suspended slabs or close to lift shafts.

The list goes on.

Master Builders provides a comprehensive range of training courses to assist workers and contractors in the housing industry to carry out their jobs safely and efficiently.

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 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 also provides information on important matters such as protective clothing and footwear, safety signage, working at heights, electrical power cords, manual handling and working around mobile plant.

Evacuation procedures, drug and alcohol testing, basic first aid and reporting accidents are also covered in this introductory course.

Master Builders also provides 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 this year.

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

The bottom line is that safety is everyone's business. This means everyone needs to look after themselves and their work mates when at work. It is too risky to take chances or shortcuts when it comes to safety and health in the housing industry. Demolishing parts of a house containing asbestos or crystalline silica is a good example where homeowners need to get a registered builder involved, especially if jackhammering or drilling concrete is involved.

Identifying the location of services such as water, gas and electricity is also critical and not always obvious. These services are commonly hidden within the walls of your home and can cause significant injuries, or death if you inadvertently drill or cut through any of them.

There are many obligations prescribed in our occupational safety and health laws which builders are required to follow with substantial penalties for breaches. Don't risk your health and safety by carrying out construction-type work at home without the proper training or experience.

