

Welcome to 2019 and the second issue of VL's *The Safe Side*. We start the New Year by looking at New Zealand's recent health and safety performance and what it tells us about likely trends in 2019 and beyond. We also consider the rising profile of workplace bullying, sexual harassment and stress and provide information on how to tackle these hazards. In addition, you'll find short articles on risk management, new ACC assistance for SMEs and recent health and safety news.

It'd be great to get your feedback and ideas about what you'd like to see in *The Safe Side* over the coming year. Please feel free to get in contact with me.

*- Jane Birdsall, Health & Safety and Statutory Risk Consultant*

## How are we progressing? Recent trends in workplace fatalities and injuries

On the face of it, there's much to celebrate about New Zealand's progress towards safer and healthier workplaces. The latest data indicates that we are on track to meet the Government's target of reducing work related fatalities and serious injury by 25% by 2020. WorkSafe reports that fatality figures are down from 50 deaths in 2017 to 42 deaths in 2018. [Read more ►](#)

**But as well as the good news, some concerning trends are emerging.**

Statistics NZ recently released figures showing that the work-related serious non-fatal injury rates rose in 2017 after four years of decline. This increase was largely driven by a rise in serious non-fatal injuries in the construction sector. The manufacturing, and transport, postal, and warehousing sectors also significantly contributed to the increase. [Read more ►](#)

Other data shows a similar reversal or flatlining of previously promising trends. We reported on the stall in improvements in attitudes to health and safety in our last issue of *The Safe Side*. And in its 2018 Fact Sheet on *Progress towards the 2020 injury targets*, WorkSafe advised that the 2018 work-related fatal injury rate is unchanged from 2017. [Read more ►](#)

**Overall, there is little room for complacency.**

## Keeping an eye on the lion's jaws - proportionate risk management.

Managing risk effectively is essential for a healthy and safe workplace and compliance with duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

Risk management begins with identifying hazards and understanding the risks that arise from them. Businesses must do all that is reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks and, where this can't be done, minimise the risks so far as reasonably practicable.

When thinking about safety in the workplace, it is important to pay attention to those hazards that can really hurt people. Spend time and resource on managing these first. And keep the focus on these risks to make sure they remain well controlled over time.

WorkSafe has produced some simple guidance to assist businesses with managing their risks. [Read more ►](#)

Safe Work Australia has also published a Code of Practice that provides more details on how to manage risks. Most of the information is directly relevant to New Zealand's legislative context. [Read more ►](#)



*"The health and safety officer isn't happy.  
He wants you to tie your shoelaces."*

## Bullying, stress and sexual harassment – keeping workers and businesses safe

One of the trending topics in workplace relations during 2018 was an increased focus on the psychosocial hazards of bullying, stress and sexual harassment. The Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety, the Hon. Iain Lees-Galloway, responded to this by asking WorkSafe to include workplace bullying and sexual harassment in its harm prevention work. [Read more ►](#)

As a result, businesses should expect more scrutiny from the regulator in this area as well as an increase in workers raising complaints and concerns. So, what can be done to eliminate and minimise these hazards in the workplace?

A crucial first step is putting appropriate systems in place. There is useful guidance to help with this. [WorkSafe has a "toolkit" for preventing and managing bullying at work](#). In addition, we highlighted WorkSafe's guidance on sexual harassment in our [last issue](#) of The Safe Side. The UK HSE

also has extensive guidance on managing work related stress.

[Read more ►](#)

WorkSafe says that it will typically only investigate bullying and harassment claims where there is [a diagnosis of serious mental harm](#). But businesses cannot take a lot of comfort from this. These types of issues may also result in employment disputes or complaints under the Human Rights Act. [Read more ►](#)

**This highlights the importance of taking out comprehensive liability insurance cover that responds to employment disputes as well as statutory liability claims. Vero Liability's [LegalEdge](#) offers broad-liability coverage for small to medium sized business with optional Employment Disputes (ED) cover. ED cover is also available as a standalone policy for larger businesses.**

## ACC assistance for businesses wanting to improve health and safety

The Government announced that \$22 million will be made available in ACC grants and subsidies to assist small and medium sized businesses with health and safety research, training, consultant advice and capital investment. [Read more ►](#)

The first round of subsidies will be offered to the construction and the healthcare and social assistance sectors. Details will be published in late February. Subsidies for businesses and workplaces in other sectors will be offered in the future. [Read more ►](#)

## New Guidance and Alerts to Note

The hottest months of the year have arrived and workers are at increased risk of heat-related incidents. SafeWork South Australia published a media release on managing the risks associated with working in the heat. [Read more ►](#)

Numerous deaths and serious injuries have resulted from work with pre-cast concrete panels. WorkSafe has published comprehensive updated guidance for PCBUs including designers, manufacturers, suppliers, installers and importers, as well as workers and any other people who handle, transport or erect precast concrete elements. [Read more ►](#)

## Health and Safety in the News

### 20 December 2018 – NZ Herald

A 21-year-old man was killed in an incident involving a baler on a farm near Oamaru. A WorkSafe spokesperson said it was the fifth on-farm fatality in December and the 17th for the year. [Read more ►](#)

### 9 January 2019 – Health and Safety Executive, UK

WorkSafe's UK equivalent, the HSE, put out a news release following the prosecution of the NHS Trust. The Trust was fined £300,000 after two nurses suffered life changing injuries when they were repeatedly stabbed in a forensic mental health unit. [Read more ►](#)



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