

Nursery Papers

August 2003
Issue no. 8



Australian Workplace Statistics

Each year incidents in Australian workplaces result in:

- **The death of 2,700 people.** Of these, approximately 500 die as a direct result of accidents and an estimated 2,200 die as a result of exposure to workplace chemicals and other hazardous substances.
- **Approximately 300,000 disabling injuries,** many of them permanent.
- **Enormous pain and suffering for employees and their families.**

These figures alone demand better workplace safety.

• Your Levy at Work •

The production and distribution of this Nursery Paper was funded by your Nursery Industry levy



Nursery & Garden Industry
Australia



Horticulture Australia

Ensuring safety in your nursery

Is your production or retail nursery business safe for you, your employees and your visitors? All Australian businesses are under increasing scrutiny to ensure a safe workplace. Nursery businesses are no exception.

This *Nursery Paper* provides useful workplace health and safety tips and a simple test you can use to assess health and safety standards in your business and highlight areas you need to address.

Most production nurseries and retail garden centres in Australia are small to medium sized businesses. However, employees of a small business don't automatically understand their occupational health and safety obligations. And being a small business doesn't mean you don't need written occupational health and safety procedures.

The way to prevent injury and ill health at the workplace, and avoid breaching strict new occupational health and safety regulations, is for all businesses to have an effective health and safety policy and program in place. This should include a clearly defined set of written safety roles and responsibilities.

The use and storage of pesticides is a major health and safety issue. Minimal use of pesticides in conjunction with healthy crop management practices and biological controls is recommended.
Avondale Nurseries, NSW.



A “no accident or injury” attitude is key

Safe practices and a safety conscious attitude by both staff and managers is the best protection against workplace accidents.

To help you assess the safety status of your business, answer the following questions, highlighting what's missing and determining where you need to improve. By completing this audit at least once a year, you can monitor your workplace health and safety performance to ensure you're always improving.

Safety self-audit questions

1. Do you have an Occupational Health & Safety (OH&S) policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you have an OH&S program to put your OH&S policy into practice? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Do all job descriptions contain OH&S responsibilities and duties? ☐ Yes ☐ No

There are four easy steps to ensure responsibility for health and safety in the workplace:

- A. Allocate responsibility for each OH&S activity to a particular position.**
- B. Tell each person who is responsible.**
- C. Monitor if the responsibilities are carried out.**
- D. Write the responsibilities and accountabilities into duty statements.**

4. Have all workplace hazards, safety problems and risks been identified, assessed and documented? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Have procedures to control these risks been documented and employees consulted? ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Is there a system for keeping health and safety records and is it maintained? ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Are work safe procedures or methods written? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Is there Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all hazardous materials? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Are monthly safety checks conducted? ☐ Yes ☐ No



Back problems are common in our industry. Simple lifting devices can help. Bournda Plants, NSW.

Involving employees in safety is essential. Clear and open communication between management and employees will encourage support from the whole team in safety activities. And involving employees in developing safety rules will mean they're more likely to follow them.

10. Are all employees consulted on health and safety issues when new purchases are being considered? ☐ Yes ☐ No
11. Are all employees consulted on health and safety issues when changes are made to work practices? ☐ Yes ☐ No
12. Are all employees consulted on health and safety issues when changes are made to the layout of the nursery? ☐ Yes ☐ No
13. Are all employees consulted when hazards are controlled? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Nursery Papers

August 2003 Issue no. 8

In New South Wales, regulations state that people as well as companies can be fined for breaches of the OH&S Act. This means employees, supervisors and managers. For example, the maximum fine for an employee not wearing a mask is \$4,125, with the employer's maximum fine being \$41,250.

14. Is information on OH&S available to all employees (for example, MSDS's) and explained to those in direct contact with the hazard? ☐ Yes ☐ No
15. Have all employees had their OH&S responsibilities and duties explained to them? ☐ Yes ☐ No
16. Do all employees know the dangers and hazards of their job? ☐ Yes ☐ No
17. Have you tested employees on their understanding of all the safety requirements of their job and the workplace? ☐ Yes ☐ No
18. Have the employees been told that their safety comes before production? ☐ Yes ☐ No
19. Are employees regularly consulted on OH&S issues and is a process in place to deal with issues raised? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Monthly staff meetings with health and safety as a regular agenda item and distributing minutes from those meetings will improve occupational health and safety in the workplace.

Verbal instruction may be misunderstood or forgotten. Written policies and procedures can clearly and permanently describe requirements and actions.

20. Have all supervisors been provided with necessary instructions? ☐ Yes ☐ No
21. Have all supervisors, managers and owners been provided with appropriate training? ☐ Yes ☐ No
22. Do supervisors train employees on safe working practices? ☐ Yes ☐ No
23. Do supervisors actually supervise and advise employees of hazards? ☐ Yes ☐ No
24. Do all employees use safety equipment correctly? ☐ Yes ☐ No
25. Are employees encouraged to report all hazards, and are these reports documented? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Simple signs can ensure all staff are constantly reminded of health, cleanliness and safety issues. Naturally Native, NZ.



We are all expected to know the law. Ignorance is not an acceptable excuse, just as it won't get you off a driving offence.

26. Do you know your obligations under your relevant workplace health and safety regulations and duty of care requirements? ☐ Yes ☐ No
27. Do you have sufficient workers compensation insurance? ☐ Yes ☐ No
28. Are safe systems of work provided in your nursery? ☐ Yes ☐ No
29. Is your workplace and equipment maintained in good condition? ☐ Yes ☐ No
30. Have responsibilities been allocated for carrying out OH&S in your nursery? ☐ Yes ☐ No

An OH&S program can ensure that hazards in the workplace are dealt with in a systematic manner, rather than in response to crisis.

31. Have the risks been prioritised to assess those with greatest impact on health and safety? ☐ Yes ☐ No
32. Is health and safety included in all existing procedures? ☐ Yes ☐ No
33. Are all procedures reviewed regularly, particularly when there are changes in the workplace? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Nursery Papers

August 2003 Issue no. 8

Providing staff with appropriate amenities is essential for health and comfort.
Mt Annan Botanic Garden Nurseries, NSW.



An OH&S program is a planned set of activities needed to make your workplace and business safe. It should be designed especially for your conditions. Putting your OH&S policy into practice is essential – or else it's just a useless piece of paper.

An OH&S program should protect your business, employees, customers and your personal liability as an employer, owner, manager or supervisor. It is about reducing costs due to work-caused injury and illness.

34. Have procedures been developed for fire and other emergencies? ☐ Yes ☐ No
35. Are first aid equipment and procedures provided and incidents reported? ☐ Yes ☐ No
36. Is personal protective clothing and equipment available, used and maintained? ☐ Yes ☐ No
37. Are procedures written for labelling, storage and use of hazardous substances? ☐ Yes ☐ No
38. Are maintenance and service requirements for plant and equipment written and carried out? ☐ Yes ☐ No
39. Are appropriate procedures in place for manual handling? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Before you introduce a new procedure, test it thoroughly, write clear instructions and make sure everyone affected by the new procedure understands it.

40. Are OH&S policies and procedures explained to new employees? ☐ Yes ☐ No
41. Are regular checks completed to remind employees of the relevant policies and procedures for their work? ☐ Yes ☐ No
42. Are all contractors made aware of relevant OH&S policies and procedures? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Every nursery needs to keep records for:

- Meeting legal requirements;
- Identifying hazards, assessing and controlling them;
- Maintaining and evaluating prevention activities.

These records can also protect you from legal liability by providing proof that you have and are applying safe procedures.

43. Is information on accidents and injuries recorded and kept? ☐ Yes ☐ No
44. Is a hazardous substances register kept and regularly updated? ☐ Yes ☐ No
45. Are regular evacuation drills carried out and are they recorded? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Employees must get proper instruction and training.

46. Have OH&S training needs been assessed? ☐ Yes ☐ No
47. Is induction training provided for all new and current employees? ☐ Yes ☐ No
48. Is workplace training carried out on specific hazards, controls and work procedures? ☐ Yes ☐ No
49. Is external expert training required in any area? ☐ Yes ☐ No
50. How can you measure the success of the training? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have answered, "Yes" to all these questions, you are in excellent OH&S shape! If you have some or a lot of "No's", you have work to do!

The bottom line

Workplace health and safety involves:

- defined roles and responsibilities,
- relevant safety information being on-hand,
- demonstrated understanding of policies and procedures,
- documentation,
- training,
- regular maintenance; and
- common sense.

How safe is your workplace?

Acknowledgements

This *Nursery Paper* was written by Ron Widman, Occupational Health & Safety Officer with Nursery & Garden Industry NSW & ACT.

© NGIA Ltd 2003

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of contents, Nursery & Garden Industry Australia Limited accepts no liability for the information.