

22 August 2019

## New Safety Campaign and New Silica Regulations

The Victorian Government has made two substantial workplace health and safety announcements in the last 48 hours.

### New health and safety enforcement campaign

Minister for Workplace Health and Safety Jill Hennessy has just launched a new enforcement campaign targeting workplace health and safety.

Named the **“More Inspectors. More Inspections.”** Campaign, the government has indicated that there will be greater emphasis by WorkSafe on more inspectors coming around to more construction sites to ensure that builders and contractors are meeting health and safety requirements. There is also likely to be a tougher enforcement approach.

Part of this will involve WorkSafe employing 40 new inspectors over the next four years and to introduce legislation to make workplace manslaughter a criminal offence.

This announcement reinforces the intention of the Victorian Government to introduce an offence of industrial manslaughter. HIA understands that legislation is currently being developed. HIA has expressed concerns with the proposal, noting that the current safety laws respond appropriately to fatalities at a workplace. Also the proposed offence should not be made in the way currently proposed and HIA is seeking amendments. Discussions with government are ongoing.

The **“More Inspectors. More Inspections”** Campaign begins on August 25 and will include advertisements across TV, radio, print, billboards and social media. This will again provide a heightened awareness about maintaining safe worksites.

The Government’s Media Release can be accessed here:

<https://www.premier.vic.gov.au/targeting-employers-flouting-workplace-safety-rules/>

### New Crystalline Silica Regulations – Engineered Stone Benchtops

New regulations which ban the uncontrolled cutting, grinding and abrasive polishing of engineered stone with power tools have been made and are **effective immediately**. The new regulations restrict the use of power tools unless the dust is controlled by prescribed methods, such as wet methods, or extraction systems that capture the dust generated.

For builders, this means that they will need to ensure that any on site cutting, grinding and abrasive polishing of engineered stone with power tools is carried out using a tool with an integrated water delivery system that supplies a continuous feed of water or a tool that is fitted with on-tool dust extraction attached to a HEPA filtered dust class H vacuum cleaner or similar system that captures the dust generated.

Builders will also need to ensure that their own employees and workers they engage on their sites have the correct tools and procedures in place and have suitable respiratory protective equipment.

The new regulations took effect on 20 August 2019. HIA was not consulted in the development of these regulations.

WorkSafe have released a new information sheet to explain the new regulations which is available from <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/crystalline-silica>

Despite the regulations being made, HIA has for some time been advocating to the Victorian Government around their plans for lowered silica exposure levels - that any recommended lowering is able to be implemented in a sensible and practical way for our industry.

**For more information:** please contact Tony Lopez, Assistant Director Occupational Health and Safety on 03 9280 8200 or Brett Wiles HIA Business Safety Manager 03 9280 8208.



MEMBER ALERT