

WORKSAFE SMART MOVE 2002

ACTIVITY: WORKING SAFELY SAFETY AND HEALTH MEDIA WATCH

Work on this assignment by yourself.

Resources:

- Sample media articles (**Information Sheets 1 & 2**)
- Newspapers
- Significant Incident Summaries or SafetyLine magazine articles from WorkSafe's website at www.docep.wa.gov.au

Task

- Collect three articles on work safety and health matters from the resources listed above.
- Complete the **Worksheet**. (You will need to photocopy the worksheet twice).

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Sample media article

Title: Winner's fight for life

Paper: West Australian 1 December 2001, Page 3

ONE battle has been won by mesothelioma sufferer Barry Neville Easter – now it is a fight for life. Mr Easter, 67, was awarded nearly \$364,000 in damages yesterday after taking his claim against asbestos manufacturer James Hardie Co to the Supreme Court.

It is the first time in more than seven years in WA that a mesothelioma claim has gone to judgement and damages have been assessed. It was the first judgement against James Hardie. The company accepted liability for Mr Easter's terminal disease, having breached its duty of care, but contested that amount of compensation being sought. Mr Easter had tried to settle out of court with a claim for \$300,000 but the company did not accept it.

Now he must battle against his ailing health as the debilitating and painful disease takes over. Six months ago he was a healthy active and vital man. He said now he could not walk up stairs without difficulty. Mr Easter said he was happy with the compensation because it was more than he expected but he did not know where he would go from here. He hoped his case could help give other people strength but said it was criminal of the State Government not to pass changes to compensation legislation more quickly.

He said if James Hardie had forced the matter to court as a tactic because they expected him to be dead before judgement then he had news for them. Mr Easter used asbestos products during his career as a builder and he said a number of his friends had died from related diseases.

His lawyer, Luisa Formato, said the judgement was significant and substantial but it could never compensate for what Mr Easter was going through. Ms Formato said WA was behind Victoria and New South Wales in the amount of damages paid to victims of asbestos related diseases. Without legislative change, asbestos victims were under great pressure to settle their cases, at a discounted rate and usually with conditions such as confidentiality, rather than risk going to court.

The State Government gave an undertaking this week to pass legislation this year that would prevent asbestos disease victims compensation claims dying with them. The Law Reform Bill 2001 amendments, which include the changes to asbestos diseases compensation, follows a Private Members Bill which was introduced by Pilbara Independent Larry Graham.

Asbestos Diseases Society president Robert Vojakovic said the changes would benefit at least 100 people a year.

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Sample media article

Title: Safety warning for rock lobster boats

Paper: Mandurah Telegraph 27 November 2001, Page 17

BOAT owners have been urged to be vigilant about safety with WorkSafe issuing warnings for the rock lobster season.

WorkSafe Executive Director (Operations) Bjorn Gillgren said the setting of pots and work practices involving pots were of particular concern.

“The unfortunate fact is that 36 people have died in the WA commercial fishing industry – including five in the rock lobster industry – over the past 12 years: *a tragic and unacceptable toll*,” Mr Gillgren said.

“Some of these fatalities have involved deckhands getting tangled in ropes and being dragged overboard, something that can easily be avoided with good work practices in relation to ropes, winches and pots.”

One common practice on fishing boats is to throw pots over the side of the boat and allow the ropes to follow them.

The ropes can tangle around arms, legs or necks and result in serious injury or death.

The practice is particularly risky in windy conditions, when ropes can blow back, wrap around a deckhand and drag them overboard and under the water.

Ropes should be thrown out before pots, directly into the water and the rope should travel as short a distance as possible in the air to reduce the risk of entanglement.

Skippers should ensure that the crew is prepared and in position before giving a signal to set the pot, particularly in heavy conditions.

Another area of concern is the use of electricity on boats.

“We all know what a lethal combination water and electricity makes and a deckhand was tragically electrocuted on a boat recently.” Mr Gillgren said. “Owners need to be aware that residual current devices must be installed on boats the same as in any other workplace.”

Mr Gillgren said he was also concerned about the training provided because many young people took up work on fishing boats, and many were given little or no training.

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Title of article: _____

Key terms/definitions	Summary of article (outline the safety and health issues)
Key organisations/personalities	My response to the article