

WorkSafe Warning as Christmas Approaches

WorkSafe Victoria is calling on all employers to make safety their absolute priority following the deaths of five workers across the state in a horrifying nine day period.

In the space of just a few hours last Thursday, a 25-year-old refrigeration mechanic was electrocuted while doing maintenance work on an air conditioner at a factory in Braeside, and a 29-year-old worker was killed at a business in Keysborough when a piece of equipment fell off a forklift and crushed him.

Earlier this month, a 64-year-old contractor died in an explosion at a housing development site at Harkaway in Melbourne's outer east, and a 76-year-old farmer was crushed by his tractor after it rolled over at Loch, in South Gippsland.

On 4 November, a 76-year-old farm worker was electrocuted while maintenance was being undertaken on a pump at a farm at Anakie, near Geelong. According to WorkSafe's Executive Director of Health and Safety, Marnie Williams, statistics show that November and December is the most dangerous time of year for Victorian workers.

"Our figures show that since 2005, almost 25 per cent of all workplace fatalities have occurred in the final two months of the year," Ms Williams said. "So we are asking every employer to stop and make absolutely sure they have the systems in place to protect their employees."

Ms Williams said every Victorian worker deserved to get home safely at the end of the day. "In just nine days, five families have suffered a devastating loss and we don't want anyone else to have to suffer the same pain. So we are calling on employers and workers to be extra vigilant in the lead-up to Christmas."

Ms Williams said there were a number of possible reasons why November and December was a dangerous time of year for workers. "Many businesses are rushing to finish projects so deadline pressures might be a factor," she said. "We also know many fatalities involve experienced workers doing routine jobs, particularly on farms, so maybe their minds aren't fully on the task at hand. "For farmers involved in harvesting or preparing for the fire season it's a particularly busy time."

But Ms Williams said while the build-up to Christmas was a busy period for every workplace, it should never be a dangerous one. "Every workplace fatality is preventable," she said. "If employers have the correct systems in place to protect their workers, if people stop to plan each day with safety in mind, and if everyone works together to identify and reduce risks, we can make November and December a time of joy as everyone heads towards a well-deserved Christmas

Safety Alert

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break - not a time of heartbreak." Visit www.worksafe.vic.gov.au for more information on how to make your workplace safe.