

Safety Alert

New Focus on Road Safety Around Construction Works

WorkSafe Victoria and VicRoads have begun working on a strategy to improve safety for workers and the public when construction work, pedestrians and road traffic interact.

The aim is to educate the construction industry on the need to ensure their traffic management arrangements meet both road safety and workplace safety requirements.

VicRoads Chief Executive, John Merritt, said that changes in traffic management technology and the impact of increased traffic volumes on the road meant it was time to reassess how traffic and pedestrians were managed around construction sites.

“Between 2003 and 2006, VicRoads and WorkSafe worked successfully together with the construction industry on a campaign called Safety for Workers and Traffic (SWAT) and as a result, we saw a significant improvement in how traffic was managed at construction worksites,” Mr Merritt said.

“We’re always looking for new ways to balance safety with efficiency to ensure all Victorians can return home safely to their families at the end of the day.”

WorkSafe’s Executive Director of Health and Safety, Marnie Williams, agreed.

“What was acceptable in 2006 may no longer be suitable for the volumes of traffic now being seen at construction workplaces,” Ms Williams said.

“Construction traffic management often relies on warning signs, bollards and vehicles slowing down, but these types of controls are considered the least reliable from an OHS perspective.

“These controls rely on drivers, pedestrians and those in charge of traffic management around construction sites always doing the right thing and that means there is a greater chance of things going wrong.

“We will be working with local government bodies, traffic management companies, builders, unions and other stakeholders to create better ways of managing foot and vehicle traffic.”

Mr Merritt said safety would not be compromised when maintaining traffic flow.

“Where practicable, VicRoads will be closing roads and putting detours in place while our road works are being undertaken,” he said.

“Not only will this improve safety, it will reduce the overall disruption to traffic as we expect the work to be completed much faster while traffic follows alternative routes.

“Together with WorkSafe, we expect our contractors - and encourage other organisations - to follow this lead.”

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