NSW GOVERNMENT | WorkCover

FOCUS ON ▸WOOD PRODUCTS MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Wood products manufacturing industry action plan

2012–2013

WORK SAFE ▸ HOME SAFE

We acknowledge the support of our action plan partners in the development and delivery of this action plan.

- Furnishing Industry Association of Australia (FIAA)
- Timber Trade Industrial Association (TTIA)
- Timber and Building Materials Association (TABMA)
- Housing Industry Association (HIA)
- Master Builders Association (MBA)
- Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy (CFMEU) – Forestry & Furnishing Products Division

Contents

Why focus on wood products manufacturing?

The wooden structural component manufacturing industry (referred to in this document as the wood products manufacturing industry) has been identified as a priority under WorkCover NSW's Focus on Industry Program, which has been designed to improve workplace safety and injury management outcomes in high-risk sectors.
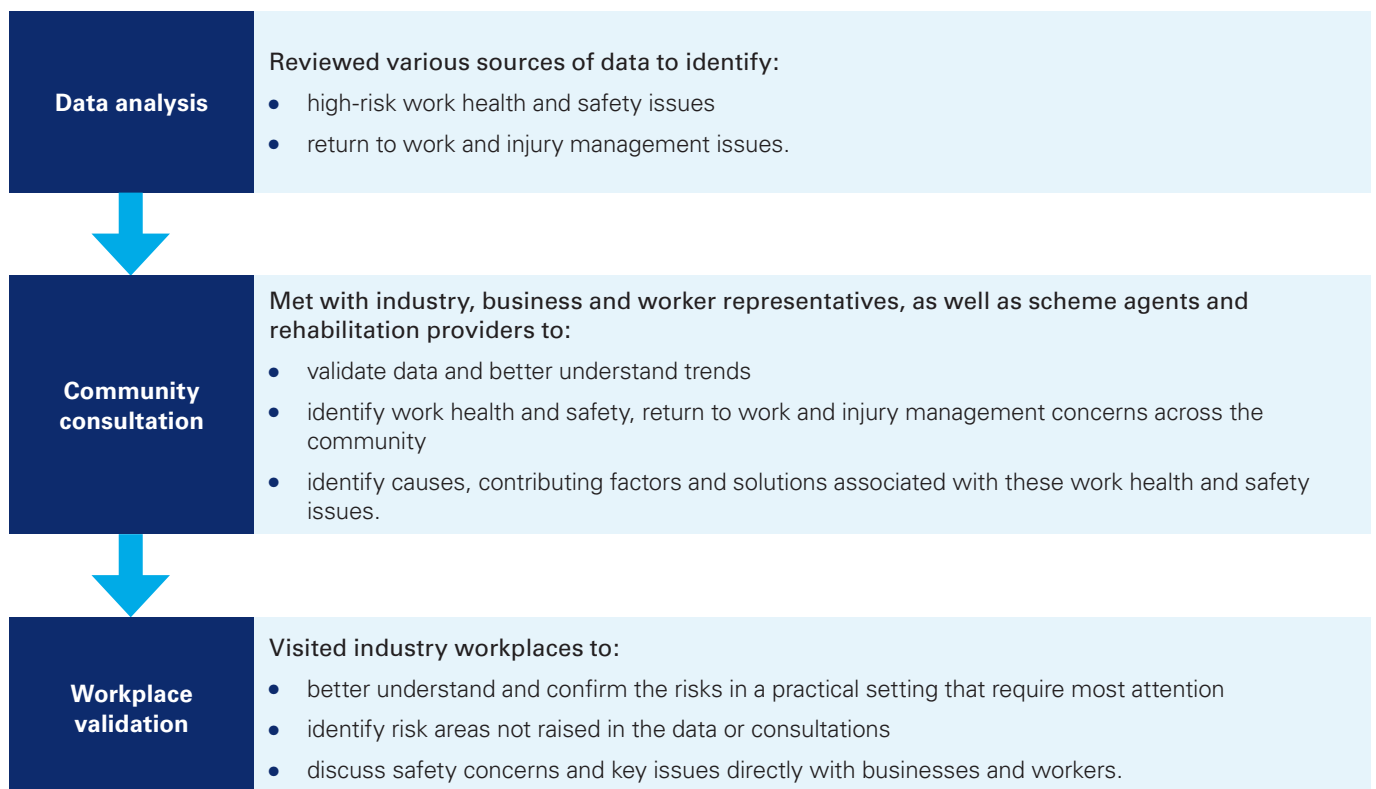
About the industry

The wood products manufacturing industry is closely linked with the housing industry. This sector is primarily engaged in manufacturing wooden structural fittings (most commonly kitchen/bathroom cabinets), components for pre-fabricated wooden buildings, wooden framed doors, windows, roof trusses and wall frames.

A report from the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations identified the demographic information provided below for the wood products manufacturing industry in Australia.

As at February 2010, 47,500 persons (approximately 5 per cent of the manufacturing workforce) were employed in the wood products manufacturing industry in Australia. Of all manufacturing industries, wood products manufacturing had the greatest percentage of male workers (89 per cent compared to 73 per cent for manufacturing as a whole) with 89 per cent of workers employed full-time. The median age of workers in the wood products manufacturing industry was 39 years (2009). This is the same as for all manufacturing industries (40 years) and all industries combined (39 years). The median weekly earnings as at August 2008 were $800 compared to $950 for manufacturing as a whole, and $1000 for all industries combined.

How we explored the issues

Data analysis and workplace validation activities identify key factors that contribute to injuries, illness and delayed return to work within this industry.

Data analysis	Reviewed various sources of data to identify: • high-risk work health and safety issues • return to work and injury management issues.
Community consultation	Met with industry, business and worker representatives, as well as scheme agents and rehabilitation providers to: • validate data and better understand trends • identify work health and safety, return to work and injury management concerns across the community • identify causes, contributing factors and solutions associated with these work health and safety issues.
Workplace validation	Visited industry workplaces to: • better understand and confirm the risks in a practical setting that require most attention • identify risk areas not raised in the data or consultations • discuss safety concerns and key issues directly with businesses and workers.

Industry trends and work health and safety, and return to work performance

There were 2105 wood products manufacturing businesses with current policies in the 2010 policy renewal year. The premium payable by the businesses for this policy renewal year was $24.7m, which averages out to $11,743 per business.

In the three years to 2010, there were 843 major claims across this industry, costing the WorkCover Scheme $19.5m. The number of claims in the wood products manufacturing industry has increased by 39 per cent between 2006/07 and 2009/10.

Workers compensation policy holders

The vast majority of policy holders are small businesses (93 per cent) employing less than 20 workers. Approximately 62 per cent of all policy holders are micro businesses employing less than five workers. The majority of policy holders (66 per cent) are in the metropolitan area.
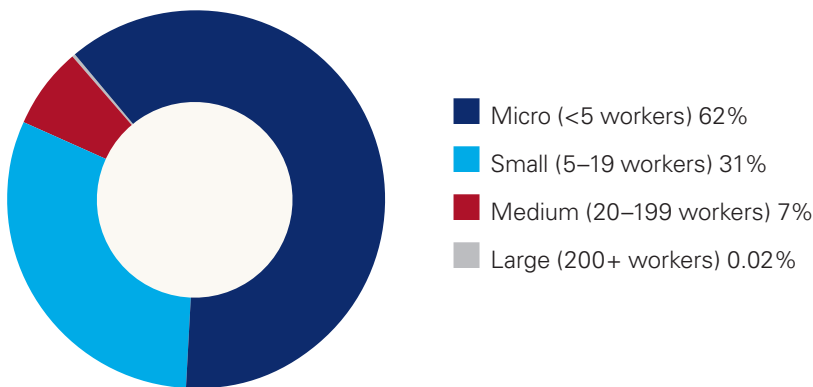
Figure 1: Policy holders by business size

- Micro (<5 workers) 62%
- Small (5–19 workers) 31%
- Medium (20–199 workers) 7%
- Large (200+ workers) 0.02%

Table 1: Policy holders by WorkCover region

Hub	Hunter	Ilawara/ South East	Metro East	Metro West	North Coast	North West	South West	Unknown	Grand total
Number	133	204	760	647	153	62	130	16	2105
Per cent	6%	10%	36%	31%	7%	3%	6%	1%	100%

Figure 2: Location of WorkCover regions

Workers compensation claims

The gross incurred cost (GIC) of claims (payments plus estimates) has increased each year between 2006/07 and 2008/09, with a decrease in 2009/10.

The metropolitan hub had 60 per cent of the claims. This is not unexpected as 66 per cent of the policy holders were in the metropolitan hub.

Table 2: Workers compensation claims 2007/08 to 2009/10

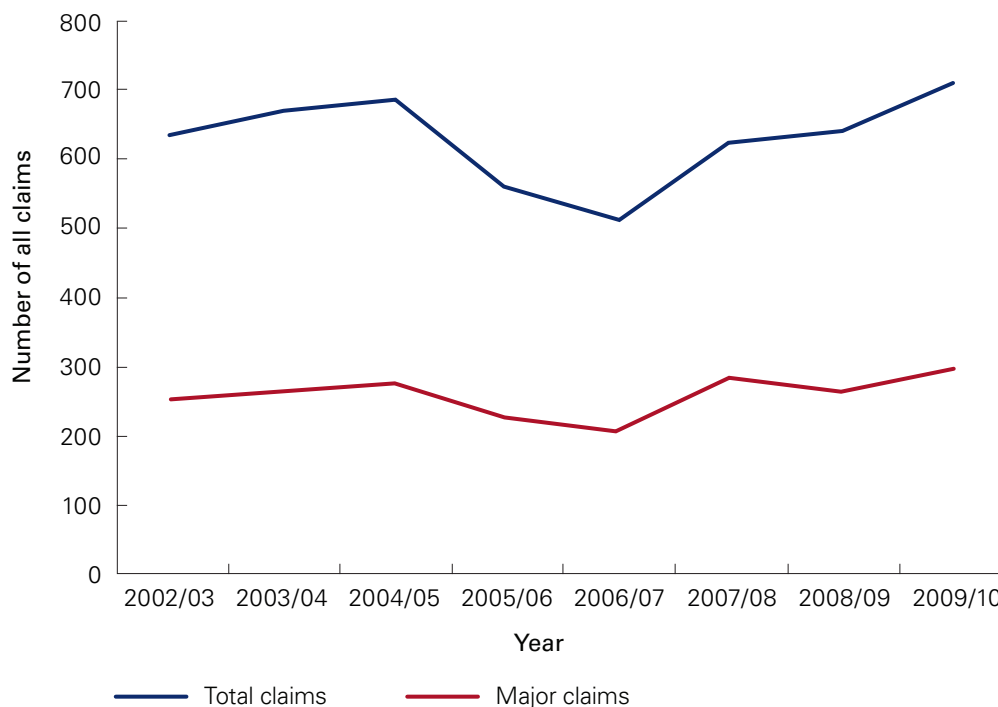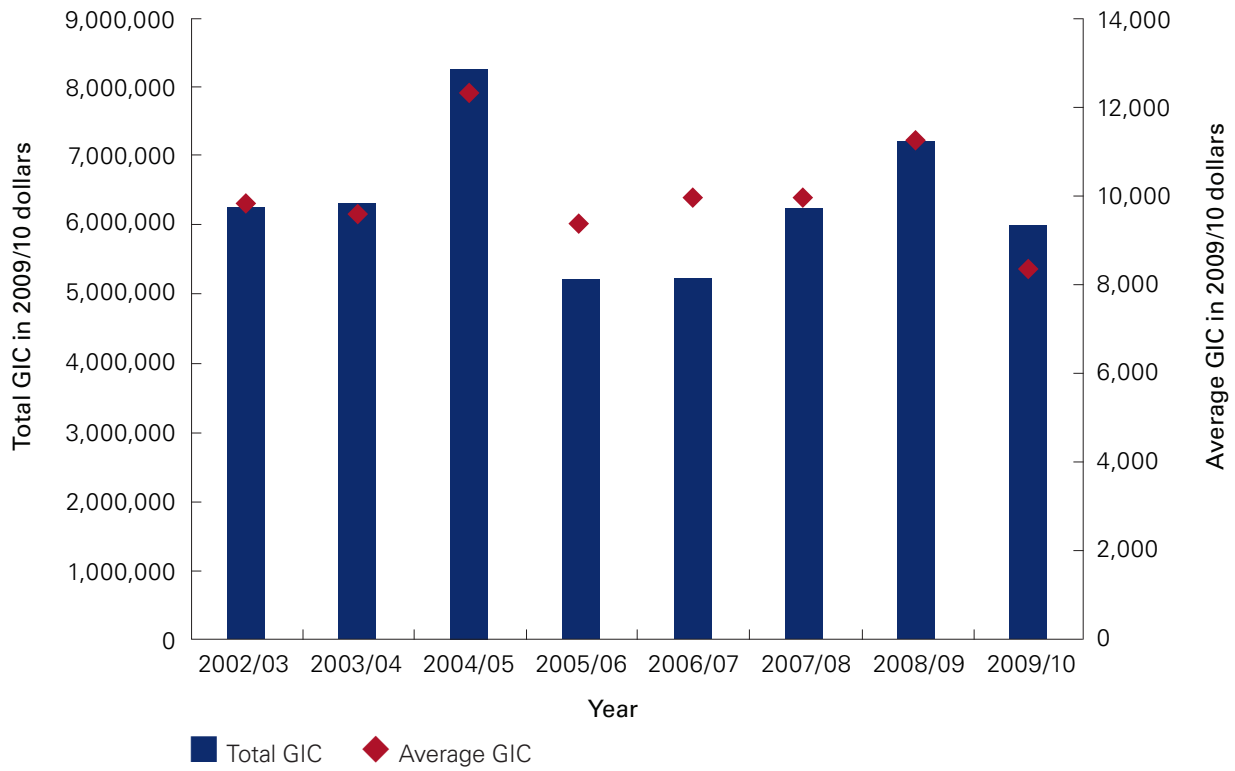| Claim summary	Number	Per cent
Total number of claims	1968	100%
Number of major claims	843	43%
Number of fatalities	2	0.2%
Number of permanent disabilities	223	11%
Number of temporary disabilities > = 6 months off work	74	4%
Number of temporary disabilities <6 months off work	1669	85%

Figure 3: 8-year trend in number of claims

Figure 4: 8-year trend in cost (GIC) of claims

Focus areas

A recurring issue resulting from WorkCover's research and engagement activities was the need for one-on-one interaction and access to quick and easy information products to achieve long term, sustainable improvements in work health and safety, return to work and injury management outcomes. Key contributing factors common to a number of issues included:

- Most small businesses operating in a very competitive environment are very time/resource poor.
- Poor workplace safety culture where safety risks are accepted by workers and businesses as a by-product of their work.
- Language and cultural barriers.
- Businesses perceive that the insurer (scheme agent) is responsible for managing the workers compensation claim rather than being their responsibility too.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the kitchen and cabinet manufacturers, joineries, roof truss and frame manufacturers make-up a large proportion of this industry and is therefore the focus of this action plan. However, the majority of the actions noted in this plan can be effectively applied across all sub-sectors within the wood products manufacturing industry.

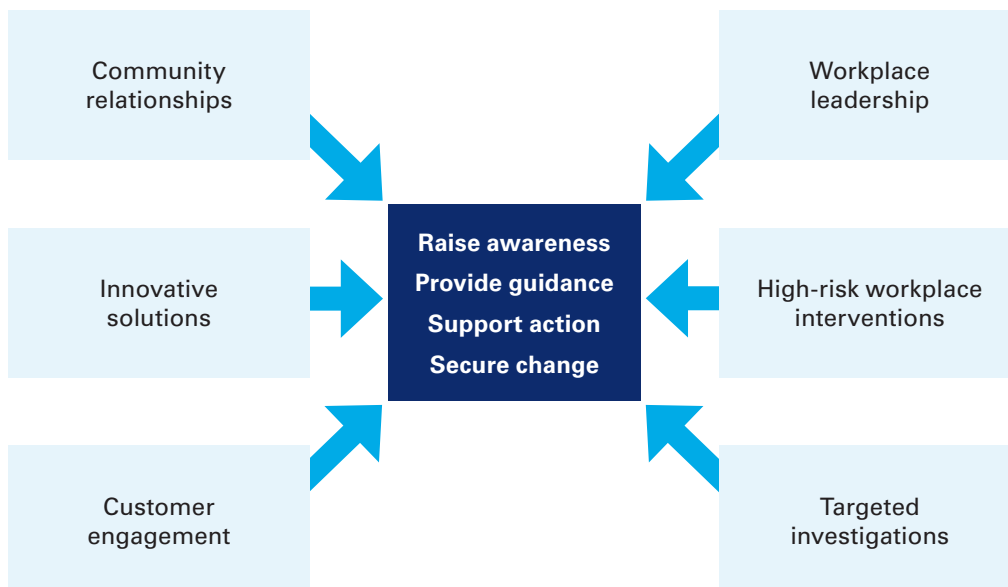| Issue	Focus area	Contributing factors
Manual and repetitive tasks including carrying, lifting, moving materials throughout the production process. Loading/unloading of materials on/off trucks. Repetitive use of powered hand-tools.	**Manual tasks at the workshop**	• Large/awkward sizes of timber sheets. • Poor workplace design layout/workflow processes. • Awkward postures. • Repetitive use of heavy powered hand-tools.
Manual tasks including carrying, lifting, loading/unloading and installing finished products at the client sites.	**Manual tasks at client sites**	• Size, weight, awkward shaped finished products. • Often poor or awkward access and egress to client sites. • Lack of control over client installation sites
Unsafe use of inadequately guarded and maintained equipment/machinery. Unsafe use of powered hand-tools (nail guns, framing guns).	**Guarding of machinery and powered hand-tools**	• Cutting edges not maintained (eg saws). • Inadequate guarding. • Guards not properly adjusted or maintained. • Timber defects. • Removing off-cuts while saws still running. • Hand-tools not properly maintained.
Occupational cancers. Diseases of the respiratory system. Diseases of the nervous system (including hearing loss).	**Occupational disease**	• Dust extraction systems not properly maintained or inadequate. • Inadequate procedures for emptying dust/filter bags safely. • Older machinery at the workplace. • Lack of plant maintenance. • Poor layout of machines in the workplace. • Inadequate monitoring, evaluation or systematic management of noise level.
Limited availability of suitable alternative duties. Lack understanding of return to work and injury management.	**Return to work and injury management**	• Workers used to heavy work – only make a claim when pain unbearable. • Businesses view as costly/time-consuming. • Workers return to work only when fully fit to resume normal full-time duties.

Securing healthy, safe and productive workplaces

Securing healthy, safe and productive workplaces within the NSW wood products manufacturing industry requires action in a number of key areas including.

- Building community relationships with those who understand the key issues and can influence change.
- Designing innovative solutions that produce sustainable change in worker well-being, work health and safety and return to work.
- Engagement with customers in a way that meets their needs and builds their capability to manage positive safety cultures.
- Leadership from best practice workplaces who are willing to share their experience and assist others within the community.
- Intervening in high-risk workplaces to help improve their work health and safety and return to work performance.
- Targeted investigations involving serious incidents.

These actions aim to:

- raise awareness and capability within the industry
- provide guidance to the industry on how to effect change
- support action across the industry
- secure change where necessary.

Community relationships		Workplace leadership
Innovative solutions	**Raise awareness** **Provide guidance** **Support action** **Secure change**	High-risk workplace interventions
Customer engagement		Targeted investigations

Plan for change in the wood products manufacturing industry

Outcomes

- Reduced fatalities, injuries and illnesses
- Reduced exposure to hazards causing injury and disease
- Elimination/minimisation of high-risk hazards through higher level controls
- Injured workers are protected and have sustained return to work arrangements.

Contributing success factors

- Workplace layout provides for safe and efficient movement of material and workers during the manufacturing process.
- Workplaces use appropriate mechanical aids to load/unload raw material and finished goods, from trucks.
- The mechanical aids used at workplaces are fit for purpose and do not create additional risks.
- Machinery and hand-tools used in the manufacturing process are adequately guarded and fit for purpose.
- All parties in the supply chain consult with each other to systematically manage the risks associated with unloading, moving and installing products at construction sites.
- The dust extraction systems at the workplaces are adequate and maintained to minimise exposure to wood dust.
- Adequate controls are in place to eliminate or minimise exposure to noise.
- Workplaces have access to timely and relevant return to work and injury management information and have systems in place to facilitate effective and early return to work and injury management for their injured workers.

Targeted high-risk issues

1. Musculoskeletal injuries at the workshop sustained from frequent loading/unloading of trucks, awkward postures and repetitive (multiple handling) lifting and carrying of material during the manufacturing and delivery processes.
2. Musculoskeletal injuries sustained from manually unloading and moving finished products for installation at client sites.
3. Amputations and serious open-wound type injuries from inappropriate and inadequate use of guarding in high-risk machinery and powered hand-tools.
4. Occupational diseases from exposure to wood dust and noise.
5. Lack of effective and systematic management of return to work and injury management of their injured workers.

Issue 1: Manual tasks at the workshop

Workers are at a high-risk of musculoskeletal diseases and injuries from either a traumatic event or the cumulative effects of manual tasks during the manufacturing and delivery process, associated with:

- poor workplace design and layout
- manual loading/unloading products and materials from trucks
- repetitive lifting/carrying of material and adopting awkward postures during production and assembly stages.

Outcomes:

Industry will so far as is reasonably practicable:

- ensure workplace layout eliminates or minimises the need for workers to repetitively handle materials and adopt awkward postures during production and assembly stages
- ensure the risks associated with manually loading/unloading of materials and products from trucks are identified and controlled
- ensure adequate controls are in place at the workshop to eliminate or minimise the risks associated with manually lifting/carrying materials and the use of hand-tools.

Actions:

Raise awareness

- Workplace design and layout including workstations, docking bays, truck design, safe use of hand-tools and appropriate mechanical aids to eliminate/minimise repetitive handling of material and awkward postures will be priority topics promoted by action plan partners at industry events and using available communication channels.

Provide guidance

- A practical, user-friendly information product developed and promoted by action plan partners will incorporate safety by design principles in terms of workplace layout and design, appropriate mechanical aids to load/unload trucks and move materials in the workshop, and suitable hand-tools. The information product will provide access to downloadable guidance materials, videos promoting best-practice solutions and case studies that support and drive change. Key languages of Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic will be considered in the development of the information product.
- Demonstration Workplace Event developed and promoted by action plan partners, will showcase best practice solutions focused on improvements to workplace design and layout and strategies to eliminate or minimise manual tasks, repetitive movement and awkward postures during the manufacturing and delivery process.

Support action

- WorkCover will support the adoption of engineering controls through the expansion of the rebate program to include rebates for workplace layout and workflow process improvements, and purchase of mechanical aids such as: fit for purpose trolleys, lifting devices, roller conveyors, adjustable work-benches, weight bearing systems for nail guns (including sequential firing nail guns), and height adjustable jigs.
- Action plan partners will support the implementation of a program where safety coaches will be made available to provide guidance to businesses on managing risks associated with manual tasks.

Secure change

- WorkCover will as part of a workplace visit program, ensure businesses have implemented adequate controls at their workplaces to eliminate or minimise the repetitive handling of materials and effectively manage the risk associated with manual tasks during the manufacturing and delivery process.

- WorkCover will provide a coordinated response to complaints and incidents within the wood products manufacturing industry, where manual tasks at the workshop have been identified as an issue.

- WorkCover will commence a Case Management Program to work closely with identified businesses in the wood products manufacturing industry, who exhibit high claim numbers and poor return to work rates over the last two years.

Issue 2: Manual tasks at client sites

Workers in the kitchen manufacturing, shop-fitting and joinery workshops are at risk of musculoskeletal diseases and injuries as a result of manually unloading, moving, and installing finished products at client sites.

Outcomes:

Industry will so far as is reasonably practicable:

- ensure a proactive and systematic approach is implemented to manage the risks associated with manual tasks performed at client sites, including:
  - unloading finished products from trucks and other plant
  - moving finished products from trucks and other plant to the installation location
  - installing the finished product at the required location.
- actively consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with construction businesses, where applicable, to ensure safe access and egress to the installation location for their workers.

Actions:

Raise awareness

- Collaborative and systematic risk management strategies for client site operations will be priority topics promoted by action plan partners at industry events and using available communication channels.

Provide guidance

- Collaborative and systematic risk management strategies for client site operations will be priority topics in the practical, user-friendly information product, developed and promoted by action plan partners. The information product will provide access to downloadable guidance materials, videos promoting best-practice solutions and case studies that support and drive change. Key languages of Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic will be considered in the development of the information product.

Support action

- Manual task risks at client sites will be issues which businesses can obtain guidance on from safety coaches, to achieve long term and sustainable improvements.

Secure change

- WorkCover will as part of a workplace visit program, ensure that businesses work in consultation to meet their obligations for the health and safety of workers whilst undertaking manual tasks associated with unloading, moving and installing of kitchens, shop-fitting and joinery products at construction sites.
- WorkCover will provide a coordinated response to complaints and incidents within the wood products manufacturing industry, where manual tasks associated with the movement and handling of products at client sites has been identified as an issue.

Issue 3: Guarding on machines and powered hand-tools

Workers are at high-risk of serious injury due to inadequate and/or the inappropriate use of guarding on machinery and powered hand-tools.

Outcomes:

Industry will so far as is reasonably practicable:

- ensure all machinery/plant in the workshop is adequately guarded to prevent workers coming in contact with exposed blades or entrapment points
- ensure all safety features including guards fitted to machinery/plant are maintained and adjusted correctly for safe use
- ensure workers are competent in safely operating the machinery and powered hand-tools.

Actions:

Raise awareness

- Appropriate and effective guarding of machinery and hand-tools will be priority topics promoted by action plan partners at industry events and using available communication channels.

Provide guidance

- Guarding and maintenance of machinery and hand-tools will be priority topics in the practical, user-friendly information product, developed and promoted by action plan partners. The information product will provide access to downloadable guidance materials, videos promoting best-practice solutions and case studies that support and drive change. Key languages of Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic will be considered in the development of the information product.
- Demonstration Workplace Event developed and promoted by action plan partners, will showcase machinery and hand-tools that have designed out the risk of being trapped in or coming into contact with moving parts of machinery.

Support action

- Appropriate use, installation and maintenance of guards on machinery and hand-tools will be issues, which businesses can obtain guidance on from safety coaches to achieve long term and sustainable improvements.

Secure change

- WorkCover will, as part of a workplace visit program, ensure that businesses have implemented adequate controls to eliminate the risk of amputations and open-wound injuries whilst working with machinery and hand-tools.
- WorkCover will provide a coordinated response to complaints and incidents within the wood products manufacturing industry, where guarding and unsafe use of machinery or hand-tool has been identified as an issue.

Issue 4: Occupational disease

Workers are at risk of occupational diseases from exposure to wood dust and noise.

Outcomes:

Industry will so far as is reasonably practicable:

- ensure dust extraction systems are adequate to minimise exposure to wood dust in the workplace and are properly maintained
- ensure systems are in place to control the risk of exposure to wood dust whilst cleaning machines and maintaining dust filtration systems
- ensure adequate controls are in place to eliminate or minimise exposure to noise.

Actions:

Raise awareness

- Effective wood dust extraction systems and strategies to minimise exposure to noise will be priority topics promoted by action plan partners at industry events and through available communication channels.

Provide guidance

- Effective dust extraction systems and appropriate controls to minimise exposure to noise will be priority topics in the practical, user-friendly information product, developed and promoted by action plan partners. The information product will provide access to downloadable guidance materials, videos promoting best-practice solutions and case studies that support and drive change. Key languages of Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese and Arabic will be considered in the development of the information product.
- Dust and noise control will be priority topics included in the Demonstration Workplace Event, developed and promoted by action plan partners.

Support action

- WorkCover will support the adoption of engineering controls through the expansion of the rebate program to include rebates for dust extraction upgrade and noise reduction equipment.
- Dust and noise control will be issues which businesses can obtain guidance on from safety coaches, to achieve long term and sustainable improvements.

Secure change

- WorkCover will, as part of a workplace visit program, ensure that businesses have implemented adequate controls to eliminate or minimise exposure to wood dust and noise within the workshop.
- WorkCover will provide a coordinated response to complaints and incidents within the wood products manufacturing industry, where exposure to wood dust and noise has been identified as an issue.

Issue 5: Return to work and injury management

Businesses have limited understanding, knowledge and capability in managing return to work and injury management.

Outcomes:

Industry will:

- have access to timely and relevant return to work and injury management information
- have systems in place to facilitate effective and early return to work and injury management for its injured workers.

Actions:

Raise awareness

- Action plan partners will work collaboratively to raise awareness of return to work and injury management through an 'Early Notification' message – 'who to call when a worker is injured', as part of a targeted communication strategy.

Provide guidance

- Action plan partners will support the establishment of an early response 'model' for effective and early return to work.

Support action

- WorkCover will pilot with relevant stakeholders, a program for micro-businesses where insurers pay wages of injured worker whilst on suitable duties with the pre-injury employer.
- Action plan partners will work collaboratively to establish cooperative partnerships with upstream duty holders (large building companies) in the supply chain with an objective to coordinate suitable duties for injured workers of small sub-contractors under an established return to work program at construction sites, where possible.

Secure change

- WorkCover will, as part of a workplace visit program, ensure businesses are aware of and understand their role in managing the return to work and injury management of injured workers.

More information

For more information, call us on **13 10 50**.