

CHG NEWS

An educational newsletter about Occupational Health and Return to Work in South Australia.

This month ... we look at an occupational lung disease called silicosis, as well as how an employer can benefit from implementing a workplace health and wellbeing program.

Silicosis

In the 2018FY lung related compensation claims were three times more expensive than the average injury claim (ReturnToWorkSA 2018).

Silicosis is one type of lung related compensation claim. It is caused by the inhalation of microscopic particles of crystalline silica dust when material containing silica is worked on. There has been a recent growth in exposure to silica dust with the increase in popularity of engineered stone based products including kitchen bench tops, which have 90-95% silica content. Silicosis can be fatal with the first reported death from working on engineered stone occurring only last month, and another 15 workers with terminal cases of silicosis undergoing care (ABC News 2019).

The table below provides details on the materials that are likely to contain silica, and the common job tasks that expose a worker to silica inhalation (Lung Foundation Australia 2017). If your workers are performing these tasks with these materials then they may be at risk of silicosis.

With the recent increase in silica related

compensation claims ReturnToWorkSA, SafeWork SA, and Mining and Quarrying Occupational Health and Safety Committee (MAQOHSC) are working to address the concerns of Employers; improve control measures; reduce the risk of silicosis to Workers; and provide support services to SA Employers and Workers.

CHG provides Employers with health monitoring programs which may include assessment by an Occupational Physician to determine exposure risk; recommendations for mitigating exposure; as well as a tailored periodic medical to monitor the lung health of Workers who are at risk.

For more information on health monitoring programs, contact CHG.

Data Highlights

In the 2018FY the average lung related claim cost \$56,079.

(ReturnToWorkSA 2018)

Materials that commonly contain silica		Job tasks with exposure
Artificial (engineered) Stone	Refractory Mortar/Castables	Abrasive blasting
Asphalt (for paving)	Refractory Units	Cutting/Sawing/Grinding
Brick	Rock	Demolishing/Disturbing
Cement	Roofing Tiles and Pavers	Drilling/Jackhammering
Concrete	Sand	Milling
Drywall	Soil (fill dirt and top soil)	Mixing
Fiber Cement Products	Stone (including: <i>granite, limestone, quartzite, sandstone, shale, slate, cultured, etc.</i>)	Sanding/Polishing
Grout Gunite	Stucco/EIFS	Roofing
Shotcrete	Terrazzo	Sacking/Patching
Mortar		Scabbling
Paints Containing Silica		Scarifying/Scraping
Plaster		Sweeping/Cleaning Up

Upcoming National Health Awareness Days

24 to 30 April 2019
World Immunisation Week

1 to 31 May 2019
Lung Health Awareness Month

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Workplace Health and Wellbeing Programs

It is estimated that non-communicable diseases cost Australian Employers \$33 billion each year in Worker absence and reduced productivity (Medibank Private 2005).

An effective method of reducing non-communicable disease is the implementation of a workplace health and wellbeing program. A workplace health and wellbeing program reduces Employer costs by monitoring Worker health and assisting in the prevention of injury or illness in the workplace – this assist a PCBU with meeting their obligations under section 19(3)(g)* of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)*.

The Department for Health and Aging (2014) have conservatively estimated the return on investment (ROI) of workplace health and wellbeing programs to be \$3.73 for every \$1 spent on a service. According to CHG client claim cost data, CHG clients have benefitted from a ROI of \$6 for every \$1 spent on a CHG health and wellbeing service.

CHG tailor workplace health and wellbeing programs to an Employer's workforce based on the characteristics of their Workers and the nature of their work.

A program may include:

- Worker Health Assessments;
- Executive Health Evaluations;
- Mental Health Initiatives;
- Alcohol/Substance Abuse Education;
- Nutrition Workshops;
- Smoking Cessation Seminars;
- Non-Communicable Disease Awareness Sessions;
- Health Expos;
- Fitness Challenges; and
- Strength and Flexibility Initiatives.

For more information about workplace health and wellbeing programs, contact CHG.

A CHG Case Study

Strength and flexibility initiative

Strength and flexibility play an intimate role in a Worker's ability to perform a job. Not having sufficient strength to meet the demands of the job and/or having reduced flexibility are risk factors for workplace injury.

In 2018, CHG implemented a large scale strength and flexibility initiative for one SA Employer. CHG's Health Consultants instructed over 400 Workers across eight (8) worksites in a targeted muscle strengthening and stretching eight (8) week daily exercise program tailored to the Worker's job demands. Participant data was captured at week 1 and week 8 to identify change in function.

By the end of the initiative, participants demonstrated significant improvements in:

- flexibility;
- wellbeing;
- energy levels;
- physical function; and
- cognitive function.

There was 100% satisfaction reported by the participants, with many Workers opting to continue the exercises as part of their ongoing work routine. The initiative was highly successful, with Workers reporting that they felt more supported by their Employer, both mentally and physically.

For information on strength and flexibility initiatives for your workplace, contact CHG.

**Work Health & Safety Act 2012 (SA) Section 19(3)(g): a person conducting a business or undertaking must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable— that the health of workers and the conditions at the workplace are monitored for the purpose of preventing illness or injury of workers arising from the conduct of the business or undertaking.*

CHG @ 103

Construction on our new facility at 103 Henley Beach Road Mile End is now complete. The building, known as CHG @ 103 contains all the services previously delivered at our 10 Railway Terrace and 69 Henley Beach Road Mile End locations.

CHG @ 103 will be featured in the coming editions of CHG News with highlights on the advantages the new facility brings.

For more information on CHG @ 103 visit <https://chg.net.au/contact-us/chg-locations/>.



Data Highlights

Based on client data, the ROI is \$6 for every \$1 spent on a CHG health and wellbeing initiative.

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Next month ... we will look at how Employers can reduce the burden of non-communicable disease in the workplace as well as feature the new building CHG @ 103. We hope you enjoyed CHG News. Let's keep your workplace healthy, happy and productive.