

BULLETIN

VACC Occupational Health, Safety and Environment



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Changes to Workplace Lead Exposure Standard

The Victorian Government is strengthening health and safety regulations around lead-based work. VACC Members, particularly those engaged with radiator repair work should be aware of future changes to lead exposure standards in Victoria.

Compared to current regulations, the changes will include:

- Lower blood lead level thresholds for when a worker must be removed from lead-risk work;
- Lower blood lead level thresholds for work defined as lead-risk, and;
- Lower workplace exposure standards.

This means the thresholds of accumulated lead in a worker's blood and workplace exposure to airborne lead dust will be tightened. Changes will impact the frequency of health surveillance and monitoring, and will likely broaden the number workers getting tested. The changes will fall into line with national lead exposure standards.

The changes have been approved by Robin Scott, Minister of Finance with a two-year commencement timeframe to minimise the impact to businesses and employees. The VACC has engaged with WorkSafe Victoria on the matter to ensure Members can adopt and transition to the changes. WorkSafe Victoria is open to consultation and feedback from industry on the changes and potential impact on industry. WorkSafe Victoria will be engaging further with industry associations and unions in July 2018 to discuss changes and control measures for lead process work. New guidance material will also be developed to assist businesses and employees on the new lead exposure standards.

Control measures Members can implement:

- Where possible avoid lead process work, explore options such as contracting out lead process work or install radiators that do not require soldering.
- Use extraction systems to remove airborne lead particles.
- Restrict other workers from accessing areas where lead processes are performed
- Ban eating, drinking and smoking in lead process areas to prevent ingestion. Ensure there are segregated areas for this.
- Provide personal protective equipment including long sleeve protective clothes, eye protection, and respirators.
- The level of lead exposure will determine the type of washing and changing facilities. At minimum, provide hand washing facilities with soap and nail brushes and locate it away from lead process work. For high risk of lead exposure, a segregated washing and shower facility may be required.
- Provide segregated changing facilities so workers can remove lead contaminated uniforms and prevent cross-contamination. For minimal lead contamination, uniforms must be laundered at least weekly, and more frequently where there are high levels of contamination. Uniforms must be laundered by specialised industrial laundry service providers.
- Use a HEPA rated vacuum to clean up lead dust or a wet cleaning method.

For further queries please contact the VACC OHSE Unit on 03 9829 1265 or by email ohs@vacc.com.au.

Regards,

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