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SAFETY ALERT – FORKLIFT INJURES DRIVER



Purpose

This safety alert aims to inform motor sport stakeholders, including officials, competitors and pit/service crews of the risks associated with vehicles operating in pedestrian areas.

Often prosecutions take place in typical 'workplaces'. However, it is possible for the same type of incidents to occur at a motor sport event. A recent prosecution under the South Australian OH&S Act is outlined below.

Circumstances

Recently a trucking company was charged with a breach to the SA Occupational Health and Safety ACT after a truck driver was knocked down and had his foot crushed by a forklift which was operating in the area. At the time of the injury the truck driver was standing near a bench.

The employer was charged for failing to ensure that:

- *an adequate hazard identification and risk assessment had been performed in relation to the movement of pedestrians and forklifts in the cold room;*
- *a system was in place to minimise the presence of drivers during the loading and unloading of trucks;*
- *a traffic-control system was in place to eliminate the risk of collision;*
- *all forklifts/ were fitted with working audible warning devices and flashing lights and;*
- *physical barriers were in place at entrances to the cold room.*

In addition to failing to address its obligations under the Act, the Magistrate said the employer had received, but ignored, previous warnings about two significant hazards.

A number of employees had complained before the incident that warning beepers on forklifts were often faulty. Several workers had also been struck by forklifts, but without sustaining injury.

"Such minor injuries or any near-miss should be treated as a warning of a risk of injury that must be addressed," said the Industrial Magistrate. "There is also no evidence that of any remedial action being taken in relation to either issue."

This could easily have occurred at a motor sport event where a patron could be knocked down and injured by a competition car being driven towards the paddock /service park .

In this scenario, the competitor, event organizer and CAMS could all be considered a controller of the 'workplace', which means they may all hold obligations under the OH&S Act.

Recommendations

As there is always a likelihood of pedestrians being in the paddock/service park at a motor sport event, it is important to think about managing the risk and consider the following:

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- Do not allow patrons into the paddock/service park unless they have been briefed on the risks or you have controls in place to minimise the risk.
- Spectators should not be permitted in the Marshalling area.
- Ensure access from the paddock /service park to competition area is permitted only by competitors and their teams. Signage for access may be required.
- Brief Competitors on the need for caution and low speed while in the paddock /service park and request that they adhere to a 10km speed limit. Use the Drivers ' Briefing to remind the competitors.
- Set up bunting/barriers along any transit route to separate crowd from moving vehicles.
- Paddock / service park Officials should use whistles to alert public of when cars are driving through the immediate area.
- Inform competitors that no cars are to be driven around the paddock /service park with their bonnets up—this restricts the driver 's view .
- Competitors should fence off any areas where major work is being performed on vehicles.
- Advise all visitors that any children in their control should be kept out of the main paddock area or supervised when in the area.
- Paddock/ service park passes/wristbands can be organized and issued to restrict access.

In summary when pedestrians are in areas where vehicles are moving around in close proximity, there needs to be an assessment of the risks associated with people and cars interacting .This means a plan needs to be in place to manage the traffic moving around the area where pedestrians are present.

It is also important to ensure that if you see or have an incident reported - involving pedestrians and moving traffic—you find out what happened and do as much as possible to 'control it ' so it doesn't happen again. This way if it does happen again, you can prove you did something about it.

An incident can be 'controlled ' by conducting a risk assessment and then applying some of the suggested controls above, or you may have your own after discussing it with others involved in the event .

To follow the risk management process click on the link www.cams.com.au/go/riskmanagement where you will find an area dedicated to health and safety issues within motorsport held under the sanction of CAMS .

Although event organisers have a responsibility for the safety of the personnel under their control, it is equally as important that individuals also accept that they have a personal responsibility to not only themselves, but also those around them, when it comes to safety.

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