



# Construction News

## Should it Take a Tragedy to Put Safety in the Spotlight?



By Sarah Bachmann  
Monday, January 4th, 2016

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**A tragic workplace incident in Perth serves as an important reminder to the entire construction industry of its obligations and requirements in relation to safety.**

The deaths of two men at a housing **construction** project in East Perth were tragic, and we send our sincere condolences to their family and friends. While a formal investigation is underway by Worksafe WA, this tragedy serves as a timely reminder about workplace health and safety on construction sites.

The construction industry employs 10 per cent of all Australian workers and every day the work environment is constantly changing. Risk assessment is regularly carried out to identify hazards and risks. On the whole, the industry has a strong culture of safety. But this is an industry with **health and safety** challenges.

Those in the construction industry handle a variety of heavy materials, including steel, concrete, timber, and glass. They work at heights, deal with electricity, manage noise and use complicated equipment and machinery. Those are just some of the issues construction workers face daily, and everyone involved is responsible for being proactive when it comes to safety.

Across all industries, the figures for workplace death and injury around the country remain relatively high. Compared to all other industries, construction

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the third highest number of deaths, behind the Transport, Postal & Warehousing sector and the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing sector.

According to Safe Work Australia's *Work-Related Injuries and Fatalities in Construction, Australia 2003-2013*, 36 construction workers are killed every year on average in work-related incidents, while 35 construction employees are seriously injured every day.

On a positive note, there is evidence these figures are on a downward trend. Nonetheless, in 2014 there were still 29 work-related fatalities in construction.

In its *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012-2022*, Safe Work Australia lists construction as a priority industry for action. The strategy sets out a framework for improvement in relation to every work place across the country, and aims to ensure we all lead healthy, safe and productive working lives.

There are four outcomes set out in the strategy – reduced incidence of work-related death, injury and illness; reduced exposure to hazards and risks; improved hazard controls; and improved work health and safety infrastructure. To achieve these outcomes, Safe Work Australia is working to establish collaborative partnerships with industry, unions, other organisations and the community.

National Precast Concrete Association welcomes the initiative, and is eager to co-operate with any actions which will improve safety within both the precast manufacturing and construction industries.

All construction employers and employees should be aware of the various Australian Standards and Codes of Practice that govern our industry. It is every company and individual's responsibility to know and understand the requirements and ensure adherence to them. Put simply, absolutely no one can afford to be ignorant, nor complacent about safety, because ignorance and complacency put lives at risk.

The loss of two young men in Perth serves as a tragic and prudent reminder of how much is at stake. It is up to all of us to provide safe work environments and to minimise any risk of another terrible tragedy.



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