Inspection program looks at workers in primary schools

WorkSafe Division MEDIA RELEASE

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WorkSafe is conducting a proactive inspection program to look at safety issues with workers in WA primary schools.

Inspectors will be looking at safety issues for workers such as cleaners and gardeners, and will also focus on the management of violence and aggression, including procedures for reporting and investigating incidents.

The program will continue until the end of the 2018/19 financial year, and will include government and non-government primary schools in metropolitan and regional areas of the State.

WorkSafe Director Sally North said today an inspection program was being undertaken in this area because primary schools had a high number of lost-time injuries, and some occupations had not been looked at in detail for some time.

“School cleaners are often injured in slips, trips and falls, and also while undertaking manual tasks,” Ms North said.

“Both school cleaners and school gardeners may not be adequately trained in dealing with the hazardous substances they work with, and may also lack information about infectious diseases, handling sharps and the like.

“WorkSafe has an extensive schedule of proactive inspection programs concentrating on particular industries or activities and aimed at providing employers and employees with information on how to make workplaces safer.

“The primary focus is to deliver information to employers, but enforcement action will be taken during the program if breaches of the laws are found.”

During this inspection program, inspectors will be concentrating on priority areas including manual tasks, hazardous substances, guarding of plant and slips, trips and falls.

The inspectors will also focus on the procedures the employer has in place for managing violence and aggression when interacting with students and others in the workplace, including policies, training and investigation of incidents.

The inspections will be conducted with the aid of a checklist to ensure consistency across all workplaces.

“A wide range of workplace safety issues exists for primary school employees such as cleaners and gardeners, as well as teachers and the education assistants responsible for special needs students,” Ms North said.

“We haven’t looked at some of these occupational sectors for quite some time, so this inspection program will highlight any current areas of concern and ensure we are looking at the most relevant issues.

“These proactive inspection programs aim to help employers to comply with workplace safety and health laws, and we firmly believe that raising awareness is the best way in which to lessen the risk of work-related injury and illness.”

Further information on safety and health in primary schools and the checklist for this inspection program can be obtained by telephoning WorkSafe on 1300 307877 or on the website at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au.

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