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WHS for MOP(S) Act employees

Welcome

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Konekt quarterly Work Health and Safety (WHS) newsletter. The Department of Finance (Finance) is committed to supporting Senators and Members to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act) employees. We want this newsletter to be a useful resource for all Senators and Members and MOP(S) Act employees, so to help us in achieving this objective we welcome your feedback. Please submit any comments or suggestions to: OHSassistance@konekt.com.au

Work Health and Safety Update

How to Best Manage Air Travel for Work

The Department of Finance acknowledges that numerous health and safety issues are associated with air travel. Flying for work purposes therefore warrants careful consideration and planning to ensure your wellbeing and safety. Consider the following guidelines before undertaking work related Air Travel:

Jet Lag:

Rapid travel across time-zones can result in alteration to the body's normal **circadian rhythm** (our internal 24-hour biological clock) leading to symptoms that can last for days. Symptoms can include: sleep disturbance, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, impaired judgement, irritability, headaches, and even digestive upsets. Jet lag is worst when travelling eastward. To minimise the effects of jetlag, try implementing the following strategies:

- **Alter your sleep and meal patterns** a few days before flights so that you are in sync with the time zone of your destination. I.e. If travelling to a destination that has a 2 hour time difference from your original location, try going to bed and having dinner an hour earlier/ later on 1 day, and repeat this again on the following day before flying out etc.
- **Schedule flights so that you arrive in daylight hours** and maximise your exposure to daylight to 'reset' your body clock.
- **Nap** briefly when sleepy during the day to improve alertness: no longer than 30 minutes, and not within 4 hours of your new bedtime.
- **Minimise extra (unaccustomed) caffeine**, and strictly avoid caffeine two hours before sleeping.



- **Exercise** during daylight hours, especially early morning as this may assist with resetting your clock.
- **Avoid taking sleeping tablets** (unless medically prescribed), as this can reduce your ability to respond to emergencies during and following the flight.
- **Avoid consuming alcohol on flights** as it can decrease sleep quality and worsen the dehydration associated with air travel.

Gas Expansion Effects on the Body

As an airplane ascends, gases in body cavities expand (e.g. in the sinuses, middle ear, the gut) and the reverse occurs when the plane descends. The body usually deals with this by redistributing the gas (i.e. equalising the pressure between sinuses). If the body is unable to effectively redistribute expanding gases, discomfort can result. To assist in managing the effects of gas expansion on the body consider the following:

- Avoid flying if you have an ear, nose, or sinus infection, or are unable to clear your ears.
- Yawning, swallowing, and chewing actions can help to permit equalisation between sinuses.
- Eat slowly and avoid gas forming foods and carbonated drinks before flights.

Fatigue

Remember that travel time may not serve as rest or 'down time'. Consider your travel time carefully in the context of fatigue when planning your week. Further information on the [Fatigue Management](#) is available.

Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

Sitting still for prolonged periods of time (e.g. during prolonged travel) is a risk factor for DVT. Further advice on preventing [Deep Vein Thrombosis \(DVD\) and Long Distance Travel](#) is available on the Comcare website.

Pregnancy

Although commercial air travel is considered safe for normal pregnancies, due to the prolonged lack of access to urgent medical assistance, many airlines require medical clearance for those in their third trimester. Physicians may also caution against air travel for those at risk of pre-term labour or those whose pregnancies are considered high risk. It is therefore recommended that you consult your physician prior to travelling.

Security

You can be a target of opportunistic crime when travelling. Therefore remember to be security conscious, particularly watching out for:

- Suspicious behaviour such as people following you or glancing at you repeatedly.
- Pick-pocks, particularly in busy places like tourist attractions or crowded markets.
- Anyone who asks too many personal questions and/or invasive or suspicious questions about you or your work plans.
- Anyone who wants your personal or work details.

In addition, do not accept drinks or food from strangers; do not carry items for other people and never share taxis with strangers.



Incidents

Staff who feel they have been impacted by jetlag or any other issues related to flying should also report this as an incident to Konekt Response on: 1300 880 777 or response@konekt.com.au

Safety Alert

Slips, Trips and Falls Potential at Parliament House

Over the last quarter, a number of slips and falls incidents have been reported by staff traversing the parquet and marble floors at Parliament House. Although these surfaces can be traditionally slippery, factors such as wet weather (i.e. floor could be wet), worn footwear (i.e. creates poor traction between shoe and surface) and hurrying through the area can increase the likelihood of slips and falls. We would therefore like to remind staff to be vigilant and take extra care when accessing these areas within Parliament House. Any instances of slips and falls should also continue to be reported as incidents through Konekt Response on: 1300 880 777 or response@konekt.com.au

Upcoming Training

A reminder that risk management teleconference training for newly nominated WHS site officers has been scheduled for:

- **16th June at 1pm** (Sydney, Melbourne, Canberra time)

If you haven't already, please provide an RSVP to Konekt via: OHSassistance@konekt.com.au

Reminder

WHS site officers are advised that their next workplace inspection checklist for 2015 is due by **30th June 2015** at the very latest. Please submit checklist reports to OHSassistance@konekt.com.au and feel free to also contact Konekt on the same email address with any workplace inspection enquiries.

Please ensure that all work-related incidents are reported to [Konekt Response](#) either on **1300 880 777** or by emailing response@konekt.com.au.

It may also be appropriate to report an incident that occurred outside work if the incident is likely to affect your capacity to perform work.

Remember that incidents could include:

- injuries requiring first aid treatment or medical treatment;
- near misses (incidents that may have resulted in injury, if a mitigating effect, action or system had not been in place);
- time lost (incidents requiring time off work);



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- psychological injury (a form of mental injury generally associated with work-related stress); and
- decreased capacity (unable to perform part of, or all of your normal duties, including where the initial cause was not connected with work).

Konekt - the leader in workplace health solutions

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