

# Work-related road fatalities double that of the workplace

**SafeWork SA**

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October 2016

Work-related road crashes account for 1 in 3 occupational fatalities in Australia and 15% of the national road toll. Work-related road crashes incur a greater average time lost in worker absence than any other claim.

So far in 2016, there have been a total of 18 work-related fatalities in South Australia of which 12 have been work-related road fatalities compared to six in the traditional workplace setting. This compares to 14 fatalities in 2015 with only five road-related. In 2014 there were 13 fatalities with eight being road-related.

It is often easier to manage work health and safety (WHS) hazards and risks in the workplace where you can see the hazard/risk and therefore control the environment more effectively than you can when workers are outside your workplace. Vehicles used for work purposes are considered a workplace so it is important for all employers (Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking) and workers to be aware of the hazards of driving vehicles and working around them. Employers should ensure they have systems and processes to eliminate the risks or minimise them as far as reasonably practicable.

## Hazards that come into play when vehicles are in use involve:

- Environmental factors (bad weather, poor road surfaces, limited visibility, sun position)
- Fatigue (long hours, long distances)
- Total awake time including travel to and from work
- Driver distractions (e.g. mobile phones) Time pressures (work scheduling and demands)
- Drugs and alcohol (including prescription and non-prescription medication)
- Vehicle maintenance (or ensuring the right vehicle for the right job)
- Working around a vehicle where other vehicles are on close proximity.
- Other drivers (unpredictability).

## Employers should:

- have appropriate road safety policies and procedures (including driver behaviour)
- inform and train workers on their policies and procedures and ensure they appropriately supervised and requirements enforced
- have vehicles regularly maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and are kept in good working condition
- allocate appropriate time for driving and associated tasks so as to minimise speed-related crashes
- where long distances or driving time is involved ensure that drivers take regular breaks
- have the most appropriate vehicle being used for the task and the worker has the appropriate drivers licence to operate it

- consider any vehicle engineering controls that may improve driver safety (e.g. collision warning systems, stability control, fatigue monitoring).
- Conduct regular driver fitness medical examinations

## Employees should:

- check the vehicle over regularly and report any issues to your supervisor
- follow all reasonable instructions from your employer
- abide by any road traffic laws
- remove distractions such as a mobile phone
- report any vehicle related risks or near misses
- be aware of traffic and environmental conditions and drive accordingly
- plan your trip allowing adequate time for travel
- take regular breaks from driving to stretch, refresh and stay alert.

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## Legislation

In South Australia, employers and workers who drive vehicles must abide by two sets of legislation:

- Road Traffic Act and Regulations (enforced by the South Australia Police)

- Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations (administered by SafeWork SA).

If you drive heavy vehicles then you also must abide by the National Heavy Vehicle Law and Regulations.

## 2016 work-related road fatalities

In January a driver of a mini bus transporting residents of an aged care facility was involved in a collision resulting in three deaths.

In March, a road train crash resulted in the death of the driver and co-driver. Again in March, a truck driver collided with a group of cyclists which led to the driver's death and seriously injured two cyclists.

In April and May two truck drivers died as a result of separate single vehicle crashes.

In May a worker traveling after work died when the car they were traveling in collided with a b-double truck.

In August, an ambulance was involved in a single vehicle rollover resulting in the death of the patient. In a separate incident a construction worker was killed when the van they were driving collided with a tipper truck.

In September a Council worker was struck by a passing car when they were loading branches into a work trailer.

## Tips and advice

For tips and advice on work health and safety, SafeWork SA offers a free workplace advisory service.

An experienced WHS advisor can visit your workplace to help you to identify hazards and risks to put in place practical safety systems that will suit your specific circumstances.

Our advisors have no inspector powers at all under the WHS Act so you can feel comfortable inviting them in to help.

**To request a visit contact go to [safework.sa.gov.au/freeadvice](http://safework.sa.gov.au/freeadvice) or call 1300 365 255**

**For general safe driving and road safety tips visit [sa.gov.au](http://sa.gov.au)**

-  1300 365 255
-  [help.safework@sa.gov.au](mailto:help.safework@sa.gov.au)
-  [safework.sa.gov.au](http://safework.sa.gov.au)
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