



MEDIA RELEASE

Engineering safe work practices pays off for Penrith business

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Creating a safety system from scratch may seem like a daunting prospect for most small businesses, but a Penrith-based automotive repair company has discovered it can be simple and is all about collaboration and accountability.

When Melinda Leyshon's enterprise Production Automotive first approached WorkCover for advice the business had no injury management systems in place, no emergency evacuation plan and no formal safety induction program.

12 months on Production Automotive has won first place in the *Best workplace health and safety practices* at the 2011 WorkCover NSW SafeWork Awards.

Production Automotive were one of six winners among 47 finalists selected from 123 entries, and received their award at a ceremony in Darling Harbour last night.

"We are great at fixing cars but didn't know a lot about work health and safety," said Managing Director Melinda Leyshon.

"In an automotive workshop you have to think about the safety of your staff and your customers, so we were really keen to learn more about what we needed to do to ensure we were meeting our obligations.

"I think one of the issues for small business owners is that they need to be across everything and we were overwhelmed by the information out there and didn't really know how to apply it to our particular business.

"We joined the *WorkCover Safe Business is Good Business Mentor Program* in 2010 to improve our safety performance and ensure we had the right preventative measures in place," she said.

Production Automotive employs 10 staff including two apprentices, who are all involved in handling specific safety responsibilities and each has a role to play in work health and safety.

"It was identified we had a lack of appropriate processes for battery storage in our workshop so I allocated the responsibility of sourcing bunding (urethane-based product used in heavy duty storage) and ensuring it met the safety requirements of the workshop to two staff members," Leyshon said.

"This allowed me to get my staff to start thinking about risk management in every aspect of their role.

"In just 12 months we have established a culture that places a focus on staff safety and wellbeing. Staff are now not only aware of their requirements in terms of their role and performance, but also in terms of reporting, and both individual and corporate responsibility.



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“My proudest moment was when my first-year mechanical apprentice, who is 18 years old, pointed out to me a faulty hose reel that could have been a potential hazard to our staff and vehicles.

“We replaced the hose reel straight away, which showed our staff that the business see safety as a priority. It also encourages them to be more aware.

“As a result of our new safety regime, we were recently awarded *OHS Member of the Year* from the NSW Motor Traders Association,” she said.

Production Automotive has developed a comprehensive WHS strategy for their workshop including a formal safety induction program and specific procedures for tool and chemical management.

General Manager of WorkCover’s Work Health and Safety Division John Watson said it was encouraging to see such a high standard of entries and large number of finalists.

“I congratulate all of the winners and finalists for their leadership and commitment to sharing initiatives that have improved safety performance and efficiency in their workplaces,” Mr Watson said.

“This year WorkCover received the highest number of entries since the awards began in 2004, and winners came from a wide range of industries including engineering, transport, boating and aged care.

“Some of the winning initiatives contributed to a reduction in lost-time injuries in these businesses, saving them money while improving morale and increasing productivity.

“People are the most important asset in a business and, with around 3.5 million workers employed in NSW, we all need to take responsibility for improving risk management and injury outcomes,” he said

A list of winners and highly commended entries is attached. To find out how to make your workplace safer visit **www.workcover.nsw.gov.au**

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