



CICA – Vic / Tas Branch Crane Safety Bulletin #341 July 2024



Greetings all. Today's Bulletin is about musculoskeletal health.

Crane Work and Common Injuries:

Based on the [most current data we have](#), the most [common crane-related fatal injuries](#) in Australia appear to be:

Struck-by-load incidents

Electrocution

Whilst these types of injuries account for the greatest number of fatalities, it does not mean that they are the most common types of injuries.

Construction work:

If we look [at a report compiled by SafeWork Australia](#) back in 2015, it's worth mentioning that in the broader context of construction industry injuries (not specifically crane-related):

1. Body stressing was the most common mechanism of injury in the construction industry, accounting for 37% of serious claims over 5 years from 2008-09 to 2012-13.
2. Back injuries were the most common location of injury, accounting for 20% of serious claims in the construction industry

The [Australian Physiotherapy Association's National Tradies' Health Survey](#) revealed several important findings about the health and work habits of Australian tradespeople:

1. Tool care vs. self-care: 88% of tradies said they take good care of their tools, but only 60% reported taking care of their body and mental health.
2. Perception of soreness: 69% of tradies believed that being sore was just a normal part of their work.
3. Safe work practices: Almost one-third (32%) of tradies reported not following safe lifting guidelines.
4. Pushing physical limits: 42% of tradies admitted to pushing their bodies past healthy limits.
5. Injury types: 82% of tradies injured at work reported joint, soft tissue, or musculoskeletal injuries.

6. Warm-up habits: Less than a quarter (24%) of tradies stretch or warm up before work.
7. Employer influence: One-third of tradies said they would stretch or warm up if their boss prioritised it.
8. Health consciousness: 70% of tradies considered themselves fit and tried to eat healthily.

The survey highlights a significant disparity between how tradies care for their tools versus their own health.

It also reveals a tendency to push physical limits, potentially leading to injuries and long-term health problems.

So, how does this apply to crane operations?

Crane operations can be tough on the body, and crane operators, riggers and doggers experience the physical strain of construction work.

Body Stressing Injuries:

This happens when your body is put under stress from heavy lifting, awkward positions, or repetitive movements.

Back Injuries:

Our backs take a lot of strain on the job, especially with all the lifting and bending or sitting for a long period of time.

How can we eliminate or reduce this risk of injury on site?

We can't eliminate the risk, but we can significantly reduce it.

The key is education and ensuring employees have the tools, stretches and exercises needed to stay injury-free onsite and at home.

Getting out and exercising is not as appealing in the winter months, and the comfort of the lunchroom or couch can be more appealing than moving and stretching.

How to Stay Injury-Free:

Lift Smart, Not Hard:

- **Use your legs, not your back.** When lifting something heavy, squat down, grab the object, and lift with your leg muscles.



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- **Get help if it's too heavy.** Use lifting equipment or ask a buddy to help out.

Take Breaks:

- **Don't push through pain.** If you're feeling sore or strained, take a break and stretch out.
- **Rotate tasks** if you can, to give your muscles a rest from repetitive motions.

Use the Right Tools:

- **Make sure your tools and equipment are in good shape.** Properly maintained equipment reduces the risk of injury.
- **Use ergonomic tools** that are designed to minimise strain.

Mind Your Posture:

- **Stand straight and move naturally.** Avoid awkward positions that put extra stress on your body.
- **Adjust your work area** so you're not bending or twisting unnecessarily.

Stay Fit:

- **Keep your body strong and flexible** with regular exercise and stretching. A fit body handles stress better and recovers faster.

Some useful resources include:

[Manual handling guide](#) – WorkSafe Victoria

[Choose Physio](#) - Australian Physiotherapy Association

[Stretches for tradies](#) – SteelBlue Australia

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