

ADARA :

Avoid Distractions and Remain Aware

Everything we do at work (and in life) needs to be 'fit for purpose' and not 'one size fits all', if we wish to remain safe.

A lot of time is taken up inducting personnel into LWU (Local Water Utilities) safety requirements. This is a good step forward in preventing minor injuries and more serious work-related incidents, but the training is often just 'ticking a box' and misses out on some of the real factors that can cause safety related incidents. Some of the standard requirements can even be a cause of injuries, rather than helping to prevent them.

At the beginning of each day, we select suitable clothing (workers in nudist establishments excepted!) If it is cold we try and choose warm, rain resistant garments. If it is going to be hot we would normally wear looser clothing that will reduce heat and remain comfortable. This is always easy in our private times when we have the choice, but work related situations can be very different. 'Long sleeves, long legs' seem to be the preferred option in most work places these days and while they are applicable in some work-related situations, they also have a down side in causing heat stress, distractions from being uncomfortable and lastly not being 'fit for purpose' in every situation. Company uniforms of Hi vis, long sleeves and long legs seem to be the same materials in winter and summer – hardly 'fit for purpose'?

Once onsite, the next distraction seems to be filling out 'safety related' paperwork. While this is useful in creating an 'evidence trail' in case of an accident, it is also a cause of distraction, when some of the time would be better spent looking around and identifying the issues likely to cause an injury, rather than concentrating on filling out repetitive forms. As a minimum, OH&S forms should be simple and concise for the work project being undertaken and not 'one size fits all'. How many people have wasted time filling out the same old questions of 'trips, slips and falls'? It also creates a culture of making up scenarios to justify the process, when a lot of work situations

are repetitive and just require a good, 'open eyed and spacial awareness approach' before commencing.

While the above points may appear to be challenging accepted OH&S requirements, isn't best practise all about continuing change and improvement and not 'same old' same old' processes? What may be appropriate in a military or mining workplace, does not always fit into every work situation. Sometimes focussed, minimalist and non-distractive methods may also be the safest. It just takes an open mind and a 'fresh eyes' approach to recognise the advantages of ADARA... and NOT a 'one size fits all' outcome!