

You can't run afoul of OH&S? Think again!

ACRA's Sydney May seminar, *OH&S obligations and risk management*, will be history by the time this column goes to press.

But the frenzy of soul-searching by all those connected with concrete repair and remedial building work who attended will not.

And that includes asset owners and managers.

For they will now all be quaking in their boots, consulting their legal eagles and looking closely at everything they do that could expose them to claims of not discharging their responsibilities in relation to such work.

They fall, you fall!

As they believed was still the case until hearing the eye-openers from this seminar's law and Workcover experts, **the time of health and safety on a building site being considered the sole responsibility of the contractor is now in the past!**

Indeed, consultants and even building owners seem to be as likely as anyone else to find themselves in court after an accident.

Those consultants who are in a position to instruct a contractor may unwittingly find themselves considered to be at least partially in control of the site.

Building owners who haven't properly appointed a Principal Contractor might find that they take on enormous responsibilities by default.

It's a minefield out there.

ACRA safety vows

ACRA members are required to demonstrate a genuine commitment to safety — yet another good

reason for making sure your repair job is looked after by the experts.

From these broader issues let your mind wander to the subject of hazardous materials and the hidden dangers that lie in store for the unsuspecting.

Thousands of units have magnesite topping on the floors. Let it get wet and it'll rot your floor and possibly cost you a small fortune. But chances are it won't kill anybody.

What fibro log?

Asbestos, on the other hand, has huge potential to cause serious health damage to occupants and careless contractors alike. Yes, it's mandatory for most commercial building owners to keep an asbestos register. But how many actually do so?

And even if they do, there's a good chance that the audit has missed the sealant on the facade joints or even the Galbestos roof sheeting.

This author recently asked to see the asbestos register at a building in country NSW and was told it was in Sydney! Not much help to the guy doing some emergency plumbing.

So, it seems, from tagging our electrical leads to guarding against exposure to asbestos, we all have a responsibility that we can't opt out of.

Full-fat risk

It's all enough to hope that if you have a heart attack, your lawyer finds your office fridge stocked with full-fat milk. That way, he'll surely aim to hold your employer responsible.

And the way things are going, he might well be in with a chance.

NOT ON ME IF HE BREAKS
HIS FOOL NECK! WRONG!