

## BUILDING INNOVATIONS

# Construction Innovation launches two year study



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WITH around three times as many workplace fatalities as the national average, the construction industry's safety record is far from enviable. Finding out why this is the case – and then helping industry create solutions – is the subject of a major *Construction Innovation* initiative currently under way.

With industry partners the John Holland Group and Bovis Lend Lease and research partners Queensland University of Technology and the University of Western Sydney, *Construction Innovation* has launched the two-year project.

Led by John Holland Group safety manager, Dean Cipolla, the project is identifying:

- Management and supervisory positions within a construction company or project critical to safety performance
- Types of competencies, skills, knowledge and behaviours required to shape the understanding, attitudes, behavioural competencies, norms and commitment of line management and supervision to site/project safety and safety culture
- Types of training packages and learning tools in place and their effectiveness to individual site and industry OH&S outcomes and safety performance.

A preliminary report, based on research up to June 30, 2005, proves a commitment by management is essential for changing safety culture. As well as having specific knowledge of safe and unsafe work practices, people in leadership and management roles need a variety of other core talents and behaviours:

- Communication skills – such as the

ability to listen, flexible styles to suit management and workforce, avoidance of assigning blame

- Collaboration skills – information sharing, relationship building, trust, ability to delegate
- Personal – a genuine understanding of the reasons behind safety, somebody who also values the health and wellbeing of everybody onsite.

As part of the project, researchers convened employee focus groups and interviewed individuals at 10 of Australia's largest construction companies.

Participants confirmed the following roles/positions are critical to safety: company board member, managing directors, chief executive officer, safety manager, construction manager, project manager, superintendent/site manager, foreperson, supervisors and safety coordinators/advisers.

Ongoing research will focus on people in these roles, endeavouring to

ascertain how frequently they complete safety tasks, how important the completion of those tasks is to their job, and how important these tasks are to reducing injuries on site.

Another survey will target site workers. The project will also examine training systems and assess how the research findings can be incorporated into these training packages.

This innovative project is about saving lives and preventing injury. It will have long-term benefits for everybody in the construction industry.

### About *Construction Innovation*

The Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Construction Innovation ([www.construction-innovation.info](http://www.construction-innovation.info)) is a national research, development and implementation centre focussed on the needs of the Australian property, design, construction and facility management industry. Construction Innovation undertakes applied research to produce industry relevant results for our partners and the whole industry. ■