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Focus on safety at work

Liliana Molina

A TEAM of Queensland University of Technology researchers has developed world-first guidelines to help reduce the number of deaths in the construction industry.

The group led by Professor Kerry Brown from QUT's School of Management looked at 30 case studies of building projects which have received safety awards and interviewed more than 70 construction businesses to develop a voluntary guide, Safer Construction.

Professor Brown says the

guidelines were developed after statistics showed there was almost one fatality a week in the construction industry.

"The construction industry recognised the problem with its safety record and it was the industry that called for a comprehensive code to make safety a central focus," she says.

"Deaths have gone up in construction because companies are sourcing scarce labour and skills in a global market and the pressure is on to get the job done and move on."

The research led to guidelines being developed for best practice

in the industry and is believed to be one of the first whole of industry safety guidelines in the world. Professor Brown says ensuring safety has to start from the design stage. "Designers must look at the buildability of a project and ask 'is it safe to build in that way?'," she says.

"Constructors are under a lot of pressure from owners to deliver a cheap building as safely as possible and so owners are part of the process."

The work was carried out for the Co-operative Research Centre for Construction Innovation, which is based at QUT.



DEATHS have gone up . . . Professor Kerry Brown.