

Safety always on my mind

By Megan Broad

Getting people to integrate safety into their everyday activities is a mission for Monique Kubank at the Department of Agriculture and Food.

Monique is an occupational safety and health (OSH) advisor, who works closely with colleague Emma Bluett to ensure the department's staff of more than 1600 women and men avoid workplace injuries and illnesses.

She joined the department three years ago after completing a Bachelor of Science (Human Movement) and a Post Graduate Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety.

A self confessed city slicker, Monique says her favourite part of the job is getting out to the regions and getting a better understanding of workplace practises.



Occupational safety and health advisor Monique Kubank talks to technical officer Sharon Hughes about safety at the Mediterranean fruit fly laboratory.

"It gives me a much clearer picture of what people are doing in the field," she says. "Seeing people at work gives me a better understanding of their work practises and helps me make more sense of the safety requirements."

Her job takes her out of Perth north and south, helping co-ordinate local OSH committees in the south west and the department's Northern Agricultural Region.

While Monique says her job basically involves talking to people, her role is diverse. She does everything from investigating incidents where they may have been an injury, to organising training and health surveillance to ensure individuals at risk receive hearing tests, tests for organophosphate levels and vaccinations for Q fever.

Monique says there is a changing culture and more and more staff are embracing safety as a fundamental part of their job. "People are becoming more aware of safety and we are seeing people join the department who already have an appreciation of safety requirements," she says.

Monique says while women work in a range of occupations in the department, she hasn't observed any particular gender safety requirements. She says women – like men – need to be aware of their own personal limitations.

"Everyone needs to work within their own personal limitations and there can be a difference between men and women."

"You can do a good job and remember that you might need to take the time to think about getting the work done in a different way. It's important to always have safety in the back of your mind to help work out the best way to do something without causing an injury or illness."

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