

Asbestos Awareness Campaign

Link to the National Strategic Plan:

Strategy:

Awareness

Outcome:

Increased community awareness of the risks posed by asbestos and its impact on the health of the community

Location:

Tasmania, statewide

Introduction

Recent media attention has provided a distorted view of the risks of asbestos within the Tasmanian community. However it is acknowledged that raising awareness of the dangers of asbestos is still vitally significant. Exposure does not always lead to disease, but every time someone is exposed, the risk of future illness increases.

Action taken

The WorkCover Tasmania Board through WorkSafe Tasmania and in conjunction with ASEA ran an integrated asbestos awareness campaign between 2 May and 30 June 2017.

ASEA's interest was to target the DIY home renovator audience. WorkSafe Tasmania's focus was on workplaces and tradespersons working in the home renovations space.

The campaign was developed as a pilot, to test the effectiveness of a mass media campaign to influence behaviour associated with asbestos and asbestos related products.

The broad aims of the asbestos safety campaign were to increase awareness of the dangers of asbestos, increase the adoption of safe DIY practice, and therefore reduce the chance of exposure to asbestos and subsequent health risks.

In more detail, the campaign aimed to educate targeted audiences about:

- the potential health dangers of exposure to asbestos
- the products asbestos can be found in
- knowing where asbestos is in any workplace or home being renovated
- consulting the workplace asbestos register
- getting an experienced asbestos assessor to undertake an asbestos survey
- using a licenced asbestos removalist.

Key audiences targeted were:

- tradespeople/businesses renovating residential premises
- DIY home renovators
- real estate agents
- landlords
- people under 30 years old

Results

Deliverables of the Asbestos Awareness Campaign were paid advertisements including: broadcast, print and online media; and dedicated WorkSafe web pages (www.worksafe.tas.gov.au/asbestos-safety), Facebook content (www.facebook.com/worksafetasmania) and Workplace Issues magazine feature in the June edition (www.worksafe.tas.gov.au/resources/wpi-magazine)

Outcomes

The campaign was successful on many fronts. Some of the key findings were:

- The campaign achieved a very high level of frequency (the number of times people saw the advertisements) across each TV network used for the advertisements. The reach across the three networks was around 60 per cent of the total available audience which is a very substantial result.

- DIY home renovators were more likely to take action than tradespeople. The main positive actions DIY home renovators took were to look for asbestos assessor/removalist (43 per cent) and access the WorkSafe website or Helpline (14 per cent equally). 'Increased awareness' was high in the DIY group.
- Tradespeople were more likely to recall the message 'the safest tool to use is your phone' than the DIY group.
- The DIY website page was clearly twice as popular as the trades people page. This shows the media campaign successfully targeted this audience, and got them to act on the key message which was to go to our website for information.
- Website searches were very high at the beginning of the work week, on Mondays and Tuesdays. This suggests people may have seen the ads on the weekend (the TV advertisements aired during shows on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday nights) and looked up the website when back to work on Monday. This is a successful outcome for the campaign.
- Facebook page visits, likes and number of people engaged were consistently high during the campaign.
- Between 2 May and 30 June there were 54 asbestos related enquiries to our Helpline call centre. In comparison, between 2 April and 1 May, there were only 13 asbestos-related enquiries. Helpline numbers show that overwhelmingly, the campaign was successful at reaching the DIY target audience.

Conclusions and implications for future work

This campaign has highlighted the success of running integrated simple messages about asbestos safety by combining workplace and DIY messages.

The central message of this campaign, the safest tool to use when dealing with asbestos (is your phone/tablet) was demonstrated to be effective in the recall

of tradespeople and the action taken by the DIY sector, showing the benefit for these target groups.

Interestingly, the DIY sector was the leading responder to helpline inquiries and the targeted DIY webpage was the second most popular web page in the campaign (after the main landing page), suggesting that there is strong appetite for greater access to information with clear and simple messages by this sector. As noted in the key findings, the DIY group were also more likely to take action following the campaign than tradespeople.

One of the targets for this campaign was to increase the use of residential asbestos surveys. Based on feedback from the asbestos professionals contacted in Tasmania, this does not appear to have had any direct impact within the evaluation time period.

This is not surprising as it is likely that it will take a longer period than the evaluation period for any changes to be identified by asbestos professionals. It may be beneficial for WorkSafe Tasmania to survey asbestos professionals in six months' time to see if any change has been identified.

The audience overview also highlights that the leading location for people accessing the web was Melbourne, with Sydney and Brisbane also featuring in the top five cities. This highlights that when people seek information about asbestos safety they do not restrict themselves to the jurisdiction of their work health and safety laws. In line with simple messaging that suits different user groups, it may also be more effective for jurisdictions to collaborate on a single campaign. This would create stronger awareness across jurisdictions, and likely be most cost effective to run.

More information

www.worksafe.tas.gov.au/asbestos-safety