

Media Release

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Campaign to stop car DIY jack deaths

DIY mechanics are being urged to take safety seriously when working on cars at home as new statistics show that on average five people a year have been killed by a vehicle they were working under.

An awareness campaign by Consumer and Business Services, the SA Metropolitan Fire Service and the RAA is urging people working on their cars at home to use jacks safely, which includes using the correct jack for the job and using the appropriate support equipment.

On average in Australia, 160 injuries are associated with jacks each year, with injuries ranging from amputation to fractures and crush injuries.

During the period from January 2000 to June 2014, there were 72 fatalities nationally – equating to five fatalities on average per year, according to statistics from the ACCC.

Commissioner of Consumer and Business Services, Dini Soulio, said each of the fatalities had related to DIY home handymen working on their vehicles at home.

“Generally we are talking about men, doing some work on their vehicles at home, with incidents occurring when proper safety protocols are not in place,” he said.

Most of the instances have involved products such as vehicle jacks, trolley jacks, portable ramps for vehicles and vehicle support stands. Notably, fatalities occur through the incorrect use of these products and through the use of unsuitable alternatives such as using bricks or timber blocks to try to support a vehicle instead of using vehicle support stands.

Trolley jacks and vehicle jacks are captured by mandatory safety standards in Australia, which cover design and construction, performance, testing and labelling requirements.

“It is important that you check that your jack meets the relevant mandatory standards, and that you follow the correct operating instructions, including never exceeding the weight capacity of the jack and never placing any part of your body under a car that is only supported by a jack until it is sitting on support stands,” Mr Soulio said.

Andrew Clark, RAA Technical Advisory Services Manager, said people considering working under cars should consider the risks of serious risks of injury or worse.

“It may be that the work should be left to those qualified and experienced where there is good awareness of safety procedures such as; jack and safety stand load limits, correct jack positioning and the correct use and placement of safety stands. Don’t risk it, leave this to someone qualified and experienced,” he said.

Members of the public should visit the Product Safety Australia website www.productsafety.gov.au, which includes information relating to the mandatory standards, guidance on using products safely, educational material and product recalls.