



# Mythbusting - The TestSafe Way Saves Lives

by Peter Harley, Director, TestSafe Australia

The widely acclaimed cult television series, “Myth Busters” where its quirky hosts Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman test a diverse range of likely and unlikely scenarios, has a real life parallel in work undertaken for clients at TestSafe Australia. And like TestSafe, the producers of the show, the Australian company *Beyond Productions*, have long claimed that the lessons learnt from these tests have the capacity to save lives.

Now they have impressive evidence in the lifesaving experience of the 14-year old NSW school student Julian Shaw who plucked a 54-year old man from going under a passing freight train while travelling home on October 19, 2007. Shaw saw a man collapse and fall onto the tracks at Lisarow Railway Station near Gosford. With a freight train about to pass Shaw immediately lifted the man onto his shoulder and carried him off the tracks and into a culvert under the railway platform. As the train roared past, the suction wave pulled them towards it. The noise was unbearable, but the teenager had remembered a specific segment from Myth Busters program and quickly pulled the man further back until the train had passed. *Beyond Productions* also cite another occasion when a US woman had accidentally driven her car into a river and avoided drowning by taking a deep breath and waited for her car to fill with water before she opened the door and swam to safety. She had recalled that exact same situation from a segment of Myth Busters.

In the last year, WorkCover staff at TestSafe Australia has tested a wide variety of equipment for more than 1000 clients. Many of these clients are simply trying to ensure that their equipment complies with regulatory requirements.



Pyrotechnics used to create a combat scene

Others are enthusiastic inventors or designers keen to determine whether their prototype does what it is designed to do. For these, often there is no standard against which to test, and a fair testing regime has to be established.

The majority of TestSafe’s clients are large manufacturers operating in global markets requiring their sample equipment to be tested, and often

certificated to a particular Australian or international standard. They need this as a fundamental ticket of entry for their product to be sold into particular trade markets, or in NSW, as this equipment is often destined for use in hazardous work situations and it is imperative that the equipment is safe.

For every client, there are many more who contact via the website or phone, to see if their equipment will pass muster. For Vince Higginbotham, Manager Testing Services Branch, this is an everyday occurrence. *“People make contact with us with some offbeat requests and one of our responsibilities is to put them in the picture as to the relevant standard and what it is required. Our job is to bring a practical approach to their thinking. Sometimes we are just dispelling myths.”*

Often standards require rigorous testing procedures including destruction of prototypes or samples by fire, pressure, or explosion, or by subjecting them to extreme conditions of heat, dust and cold. TestSafe is equipped to do all of this and more, and the technical officers and engineers are well practised at devising testing situations for all forms of equipment.

They are the essential “myth busters”.



*Drum-lifting device being tested at TestSafe*

Recently a client brought his drum-lifting invention to be tested before it was put on display at a Safety Show. The brief was to determine the maximum weight it could lift before it would malfunction.

The result was the equivalent lift of 3 Holden Commodores (about 3 tonne), and far more than the contents of the heaviest 44-gallon drum. (See above photograph of test). On other occasions, clients have wanted everything from testing fireworks for use in army battle scenarios or to recreating a meteor landing on a house (currently being screened as an advertisement for the new Toyota Klueger Grande).



*Stage Set for Toyota Klueger Advertisement*