



INFORMATION SHEET

Safe work method statement for high risk construction work

This Information Sheet provides advice for persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) on the function, content and application of safe work method statements (SWMS). The Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 and Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulations 2022 (WHS Regulations), require a SWMS to be prepared for proposed high risk construction work before commencing any activity that:

- involves a risk of a person falling more than 2 metres
- is carried out on a telecommunication tower
- involves demolition of an element of a structure that is load-bearing
- involves demolition of an element of a structure that is related to the physical integrity of the structure
- involves, or is likely to involve, the disturbance of asbestos
- involves structural alterations or repairs that require temporary support to prevent collapse
- is carried out in or near a confined space
- is carried out in or near a shaft or trench with excavated depth greater than 1.5 metres, or a tunnel
- involves the use of explosives
- is carried out on or near pressurised gas distribution mains or piping
- is carried out on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
- is carried out on or near energised electrical installations or services
- is carried out in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
- involves tilt up or precast concrete
- is carried out on, in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor that is in use by traffic other than pedestrians
- is carried out in an area in which there is any movement of powered mobile plant
- is carried out in an area in which there are artificial extremes of temperature
- is carried out in or near water or other liquid that involves a risk of drowning, or
- involves diving work.

A SWMS is not required for 'work of a minor nature'. For further information on what is 'work of a minor nature' see the Safe Work Australia [Construction work – Work of minor nature: information sheet](#).

Documents prepared for other safe work systems may meet SWMS requirements if prepared and used for high risk construction work activities in the same way as a SWMS, such as asbestos management plans or mine safety management systems.

The [Construction work: Code of practice](#) outlines the requirements for SWMS and this information sheet and appendices provide further information.

What is a SWMS?

A SWMS is a document that sets out the high risk construction work activities to be carried out at a workplace, the hazards arising from these activities and the measures to be put in place to control the risks.

One SWMS can be used for work that involves multiple high risk construction work activities, for example a work activity that requires using powered mobile plant, working at heights of more than 2 metres and working adjacent to a road used by traffic other than pedestrians.

A SWMS is classed as an administrative control and is used to support higher order controls to eliminate or minimise risks to health and safety, for example engineering controls.

A SWMS is generally different from other documents that focus on specific tasks or processes, such as a job safety analysis or a safe operating procedure. A SWMS is not intended to be a procedure, rather it is a tool to help PCBUs and workers confirm and monitor the control measures required at the workplace.

What do I need to do?

A PCBU must prepare a SWMS, or ensure a SWMS has been prepared, for high risk construction work activities. A SWMS must be prepared before this work starts. For all other construction activities a SWMS is not required. However, a PCBU must manage risks to health and safety by eliminating or minimising risks so far as is reasonably practicable. [Appendix 1](#) provides recommended steps for developing and using a SWMS.

A principal contractor must also obtain the SWMS before high risk construction work on a construction project starts.

Who should prepare a SWMS?

The person responsible for carrying out the high risk construction work is best placed to prepare the SWMS in consultation with workers who will be directly engaged in the work. Generally this means a SWMS is prepared by the PCBU for their workers, or by the subcontractor for their workers and themselves.

The principal contractor, PCBU and subcontractors should consult with each other to determine who is in the best position to prepare the SWMS.

PCBUs, the principal contractor, managers, contractors, leading hands and workers should all be involved in developing a SWMS. Consulting workers is important so they understand the detail of the SWMS and what they are required to do to implement and maintain risk controls. Sharing information and using the knowledge and experience of workers will help make sure the work is performed in accordance with the SWMS.

If there is a health and safety representative at the workplace they should also be consulted when developing a SWMS.

What is the role of the principal contractor?

Under WHS Regulations each 'construction project', that is a project that involves construction work where 5 or more persons are, or are likely to be, working at the same time at a construction site, must have a 'principal contractor'. A construction project has only one principal contractor at a time, which may be the PCBU that commissions the construction project, or another PCBU engaged and authorised to have management of the workplace.

The principal contractor must prepare a written WHS management plan for the workplace before work on the construction work commences.

A copy of the SWMS must be given to the principal contractor before commencing high risk construction work on a construction project.

The principal contractor's WHS management plan must include the arrangements for collecting, assessing, monitoring and reviewing the SWMS.

A principal contractor should put in place arrangements to make sure the high risk construction work is performed safely in accordance with the SWMS. This can be done by monitoring the implementation of the SWMS 'on the ground'.

What information must be included in a SWMS?

A SWMS must:

- identify the work that is high risk construction work
- specify hazards relating to the high risk construction work and the risks to health and safety
- describe the measures to be implemented to control the risks, and
- describe how the control measures are to be implemented, monitored and reviewed.

A SWMS should be short and focus on describing the specific hazards identified for the high risk construction work to be undertaken and the control measures to be put in place so the work is carried out safely (see [Appendix 2](#)). A lengthy, overly detailed SWMS can be difficult to understand, apply at the workplace, monitor or review.

A SWMS must be easily understood by workers, including those from non-English speaking backgrounds. For example, pictures or diagrams may be a more effective way of communicating information.

While there are other legislative requirements to ensure health and safety, for example to control exposure to noise and manual task hazards, these hazards and risk controls do not need to be included in a SWMS.

If the SWMS is based on a workplace-specific risk assessment, evidence of the risk assessment may be required by the regulator or for auditing purposes but does not need to be detailed in the SWMS.

SWMS template

A SWMS template is provided at [Appendix 2](#). This template outlines the information which must be included in a SWMS. An example of how to fill out the SWMS information is provided at [Appendix 3](#).

The template also includes other information which should be included as best practice, for example who was consulted to prepare the SWMS. However, when adding more information to the SWMS consider the importance and relevance of the information and whether it will add unnecessary length or complexity to the document.

Can a generic SWMS be used?

It is important for a SWMS to reflect the specific circumstances of the workplace in which it will operate, that is the workplace where the high risk construction work is to be carried out, the work environment and the workers carrying out the work.

A generic SWMS used at different workplaces may not meet the requirements of WHS Regulations unless it has first been reviewed to take into account the hazards and risks at the specific workplace and amended as necessary.

One SWMS can be prepared to cover a variety of tasks if it takes into account the changing nature of the work environment. Alternatively, a separate SWMS can be prepared for each high risk construction work activity. In this case consider situations where different activities impact each other, for example using powered mobile plant during the construction of a tunnel.

Implementing and reviewing a SWMS

High risk construction work must be carried out in accordance with the SWMS. The PCBU must put in place arrangements to ensure the SWMS is being complied with, for example workplace visits.

If work is not being carried out in accordance with the SWMS then it must stop immediately or as soon as it is safe to do so. In these cases the SWMS should be reviewed and if necessary revised to reflect the safest way to carry out the work that is reasonably practicable. Work must not resume until the work can be carried out in accordance with the SWMS.

A PCBU must also ensure a SWMS is reviewed and as necessary revised if the measures put in place to control risks to health and safety are revised.

Where do I keep a SWMS?

The SWMS should be kept at the workplace where the high risk construction work will be carried out. If this is not possible then a SWMS should be kept at a location where it can be delivered to the workplace quickly. A SWMS can also be kept electronically.

A copy of the SWMS must be kept until the high risk construction work to which it relates is completed. If a notifiable incident occurs in connection to the high risk construction work to which the SWMS relates, then it must be kept for at least two years from the date of the incident.

Further information

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

- [Construction work: Code of practice](#)
- [Demolition work: Code of practice](#)

Safe Work Australia

- [Construction work – Work of minor nature: Information sheet](#)

Appendix 1

Recommended steps for using the safe work method statement (SWMS) template

1. Consult with relevant workers involved with the high risk construction work, on the activities involved and associated hazards, risks and controls.
2. In the 'High risk construction work' column, identify the high risk construction work that will be undertaken.
3. In the 'What are the hazards and risks?' column, list the hazards and risks for each high risk construction work activity.
4. Identify the workplace circumstances that may affect the way in which the high risk construction work will be done, for example:
 - (a) information relating to the design of the structure, the workplace (for example location, access, transport) and information contained in the WHS Management Plan
 - (b) information on any 'essential services' located on or near the workplace
 - (c) confirmation that the regulator has been told of any 'notifiable work' (for example demolition work involving explosives), and
 - (d) safe work methods and plant to be used.
5. In the 'What are the control measures?' column, select an appropriate control or combination of controls by working through the hierarchy of controls. It is important you are able to justify why the selected control measure is reasonably practicable for the specific workplace and work activity.

Selecting control measures

1. Eliminate the risks so far as is reasonably practicable.
2. If this is not reasonably practicable, minimise them so far as reasonably practicable by:
 - (a) substituting the hazard
 - (b) isolating the hazard, and
 - (c) implementing engineering controls.
3. If the risk still remains, minimise the remaining risk by implementing administrative controls
4. If the risk still remains, minimise the remaining risk by ensuring the provision and use of suitable personal protective equipment (PPE).

SWMS compliance (information, monitoring and review)

1. Brief each team member on the SWMS before commencing work. Ensure each team member knows work is to stop if the SWMS is not followed.
2. Observe the work being carried out and monitor compliance with the SWMS.
Review risk controls regularly including:
 - (a) before a change occurs to the work itself, the system of work or the work location
 - (b) if a new hazard associated with the work is identified
 - (c) when new or extra information about the hazard becomes available
 - (d) when a notifiable incident occurs in relation to the work, and
 - (e) when risk controls are inadequate or the SWMS is not being followed.

In any of the above situations stop the work, review the SWMS, adjust as required and re-brief the team.

3. Keep the SWMS in a readily available location for the duration of the high risk construction work and for at least 2 years after a notifiable incident occurs.
4. If high risk construction work is being carried out in connection with a construction project, the principal contractor must be provided with a copy of the SWMS before the high risk construction work starts.

Appendix 2

High risk construction work safe work method statement template

Template provided as guidance for developing safe work method statement (SWMS) under the WHS Regulations.

Note: Work must be performed in accordance with this SWMS. This SWMS must be kept accessible for each relevant worker and available for inspection until the high risk construction work related to this SWMS is completed. If the SWMS is revised, every version should be kept. If a notifiable incident occurs in relation to the high risk construction work in this SWMS, the SWMS must be kept for at least 2 years from the date of the notifiable incident.

Company name:

Work activity:

Workplace location:

**Person conducting a business
or undertaking (PCBU):**

Principal contractor (PC):

Works manager:

Date SWMS provided to PC:

High risk construction work:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Risk of a person falling more than 2 metres | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on a telecommunication tower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition of load-bearing structure | <input type="checkbox"/> Likely to involve disturbing asbestos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a confined space | <input type="checkbox"/> Temporary load-bearing support for structural alterations or repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of explosives | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a shaft or trench deeper than 1.5 m or a tunnel |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near pressurised gas mains or piping | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near energised electrical installations or services | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tilt-up or precast concrete elements | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on, in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor in use by traffic other than pedestrians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work in an area with movement of powered mobile plant | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in areas with artificial extremes of temperature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diving work | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near water or other liquid that involves a risk of drowning |
-

Person responsible for ensuring compliance with SWMS:

Date SWMS received:

What measures are in place to ensure compliance with SWMS?

Person responsible for reviewing SWMS control measures:

Date SWMS received by reviewer:

How will SWMS control measures be reviewed?

Review date:

Reviewer's signature:

What are the tasks involved?

What are the hazards and risks?

What are the control measures?

List work tasks in a logical order, with related high risk construction work

Identify the hazards and risks that may cause harm to workers or the public

Describe what will be done to control the risk. What will you do to make the activity as safe as possible?

If you require more space for the above section, please use the end of this form

Name of worker(s)

Worker signature(s)

Date SWMS received by workers:

Additional information

Appendix 3

Sample of a completed high risk construction work safe work method statement

Sample of a completed safe work method statement (SWMS), provided as an example only.

Template provided as guidance for developing a safe work method statement (SWMS) under the WHS Regulations.

Note: Work must be performed in accordance with this SWMS. This SWMS must be kept accessible for each relevant worker and available for inspection until the high risk construction work related to this SWMS is completed. If the SWMS is revised, every version should be kept. If a notifiable incident occurs in relation to the high risk construction work in this SWMS, the SWMS must be kept for at least 2 years from the date of the notifiable incident.

Company name:	ABC Bricklaying		
Work activity:	Bricklaying	Workplace location:	Potters Hut, Brick Street, Pottery WA 6055
Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU):	ABC Bricklaying 123 Mortar Street Standard Course WA 6107 Ph: (08) 9867 5309	Principal contractor (PC):	XYZ Contracting Services 8910 Management Road Projectville WA 6066 Ph. (08) 9362 4368
Works manager:	Fred Bloggs 0400 111 111	Date SWMS provided to PC:	23/06/2023

High risk construction work:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Risk of a person falling more than 2 metres | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on a telecommunication tower |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition of load-bearing structure | <input type="checkbox"/> Likely to involve disturbing asbestos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a confined space | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Temporary load-bearing support for structural alterations or repairs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Use of explosives | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a shaft or trench deeper than 1.5 m or a tunnel |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work on or near pressurised gas mains or piping | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work on or near energised electrical installations or services | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tilt-up or precast concrete elements | <input type="checkbox"/> Work on, in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor in use by traffic other than pedestrians |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work in an area with movement of powered mobile plant | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in areas with artificial extremes of temperature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diving work | <input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near water or other liquid that involves a risk of drowning |

Person responsible for ensuring compliance with SWMS:	Joe Bloggs, Leading Hand	Date SWMS received:
What measures are in place to ensure compliance with SWMS?	ABC Bricklaying WHS policies and procedures, general and workplace induction training, toolbox meetings, SWMS provided to and discussed with worker(s) at workplace and signed off, ongoing workplace supervision by experienced leading hand.	
Person responsible for reviewing SWMS control measures:	Fred Bloggs, Works Manager	Date SWMS received by reviewer:
How will SWMS control measures be reviewed?	SWMS control measures to be reviewed (and revised if necessary) if work tasks/methods change or unexpected issues arise.	
Review date:	Reviewer's signature:	

What are the tasks involved?	What are the hazards and risks?	What are the control measures?
List work tasks in a logical order, with related high risk construction work	Identify the hazards and risks that may cause harm to workers or the public	Describe what will be done to control the risk. What will you do to make the activity as safe as possible?
Delivery of bricks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Movement of powered mobile plant. • Work in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor in use by traffic other than pedestrians. 	Workers being struck by powered mobile plant including delivery vehicle and forklift used for unloading. Workers being struck by vehicles in adjacent road or traffic corridor. Vehicles in adjacent road or traffic corridor being struck by falling objects	Implement workplace traffic management plan and make available to workers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion zone for mobile plant to be clearly identified (signage and barricades as per site plan) and controlled during vehicle loading/unloading operations. • Dedicated, trained road traffic controller(s) to direct traffic entering and leaving site and control traffic (pedestrian and vehicle) on adjacent pedestrian footpaths and roadways. • Use portable traffic signals and/or temporary safety barriers to direct/control traffic flow as required. • Brick delivery vehicle to be unloaded on-site (not from public roadway). Place brick pallets adjacent to bricklaying work areas (inside workplace boundaries and clear of workplace traffic routes).
Working at ground level Movement of powered mobile plant.	Being struck by powered mobile plant.	Powered mobile plant to travel on planned and controlled workplace traffic routes. Where powered mobile plant are required to travel outside planned and controlled routes, a dedicated, trained road traffic controller is to control plant movement.

What are the tasks involved?	What are the hazards and risks?	What are the control measures?
<p>Working above ground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A risk of a person falling more than 2 metres. Construction work is carried out on or near energised electrical installations or services. 	<p>Worker falling from height.</p> <p>Worker coming in contact with or receiving electric shock from overhead electric lines.</p> <p>Plant/equipment contacting overhead electric lines.</p>	<p>For bricklaying activity where there is a risk of a person falling less than 2 metres, use fully decked heavy duty frame trestle scaffolds, with bay lengths of 1.8 metres or less.</p> <p>For bricklaying activity where there is a risk of a person falling greater than 2 metres, use heavy duty modular scaffolds with brick-guards.</p> <p>Scaffolds from which a person can fall more than 4 metres must be constructed and certified by a licensed scaffolder.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platforms are not to be loaded with more than 100 bricks per bay (or 400 kg of blocks). No scaffold alterations are to be undertaken except by licensed scaffolder. Access to scaffold platforms is to be via stairs or ladder towers. <p>The exclusion zones and approach distances to overhead electric lines at the locations and distances specified on the site plan are to be clearly identifiable and enforced by a dedicated controller.</p>
<p>Constructing brick walls</p> <p>Structural alterations or repairs requiring temporary support to prevent collapse.</p>	<p>Worker injured by structural collapse before completion and curing.</p>	<p>Brace constructed brick walls in accordance with Company Instruction Sheet #3.</p>
<p>Work completion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A risk of a person falling more than 2 metres. Structural alterations or repairs requiring temporary support to prevent collapse. 	<p>Injuries to public from unauthorised access to workplace (for example, falls greater than 2 metres, structural collapse).</p>	<p>Scaffolding and site fencing is secure and serviceable. Entries and exits must be locked at the end of each day.</p>
<p>If you require more space for the above section, please use the end of this form</p>		
Name of worker(s)	Worker signature(s)	
Tom Smith		
Bill Smith		
Date SWMS received by workers:	31/05/2023	
Additional information		