WorkSafe VICTORIA

## A guide for small construction businesses and subcontractors

# The pocket guide for construction safety

Edition No. 1 – July 2024

# Contents

# About this guide

Construction is one of Victoria's most hazardous and high-risk industries. Every year, workers are killed or injured on Victorian construction sites.

This guide is for construction businesses with fewer than 20 employees. It provides information to help employers and self-employed people manage:

- common health and safety issues on construction sites
- their health and safety obligations under Victorian occupational health and safety (OHS) laws.

The guide may also benefit subcontractors and others.

This publication is not a complete guide to the law. It should be read in conjunction with:

- the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (OHS Act)
- the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (OHS Regulations)
- construction compliance codes
- industry standards.

## Acknowledgements

This pocket guide has been developed from SafeWork NSW's Pocket Guide to Construction Safety, with SafeWork NSW's permission.

A working group helped develop this guide. The working group included employer and employee representatives, industry associations, unions and WorkSafe.

# QR Code instructions

This guide contains QR codes that will direct you to further information.

Use the built-in QR code reader in your smartphone or download a QR reader application to your mobile device. Free apps are available on the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store for Android devices.

Once you have download the QR reader, open it and scan the QR code on the page.

Scanning the QR code will open the website page where you can find further information.


Figure 1: You can download QR readers from the Apple App Store of Google Play Store.

Figure 2: Scan to visit the WorkSafe website.

# Contact WorkSafe

## Emergencies and notifiable incidents

If there is a death or serious injury to a person, you must report it to WorkSafe immediately.

**Call 13 23 60**
**24 hours a day, 7 days a week**

If the situation is still dangerous or high-risk, call emergency services immediately on 000.

## Speak to an Advisor

**Call 1800 136 089**
**7:30 am – 6:30 pm, Monday to Friday**

## If you need assistance

### Translating and Interpreting Service

If you would like support from an interpreter, you can contact WorkSafe using the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National). Call 131 450.

### National Relay Service

If you are deaf or find it hard to hear or speak with people who use a phone, you can contact WorkSafe using the National Relay Service.

**Voice Relay:** 1300 555 727
**TTY:** 133 677
**SMS relay:** 0423 677 767

Figure 3: Contact WorkSafe.

Figure 4: Find information about the construction industry on WorkSafe's website.

## General information and resources for construction sites

WorkSafe has a range of health and safety guidance for the construction industry. Resources include factsheets, guides, videos, toolbox talks and checklists.

Scan the QR code to visit the Construction industry landing page on the WorkSafe website.

Figure 5: Construction.

# Management checklists

The following questions relate to your OHS obligations. Answering the questions can help you meet those obligations.

If you do not tick a box, take whatever steps are reasonably practicable to manage the health and safety risks.

This information should not be viewed as an absolute guide to the law. The information should be read together with the OHS Act and OHS Regulations.

Figure 6: The OHS Act.

Figure 7: The OHS Regulations.

# High-risk construction work

A safe work method statement (SWMS) is a document that sets out the high-risk construction work (HRCW) to be carried out at a workplace. The SWMS also sets out the hazards arising from the HRCW and the measures to be put in place to control the risks.

The OHS Regulations require employers and self-employed persons to prepare a SWMS before starting HRCW.

☐ Has a SWMS been prepared?

More information about HRCW and SWMS is on the WorkSafe website.

Figure 8: Safe Work Method Statements guidance.

Figure 9: Ensure the workplace has documented emergency procedures.

## Preparing for emergencies

- ☐ Are there documented emergency procedures?
- ☐ Do employees on site know the emergency procedures and the location of the nearest medical centre or hospital?
- ☐ Are emergency response plans trialled to ensure they remain effective?
- ☐ Is there a means of raising the alarm and does it work?
- ☐ Is there a way to contact emergency services from the site?
- ☐ Are there suitable entry, exit and evacuation routes and are they kept clear?
- ☐ Are there first aid facilities and a stocked first aid kit on site?
- ☐ Is a trained first aider available to provide first aid?

Figure 10: Effective emergency response plans.

Figure 11: First aid in the workplace compliance code.

Figure 12: Employers have obligations to employees.

# General management

As an employer, you have obligations to employees, including independent contractors. Do you:

- ☐ check they hold a general Construction Induction Training card (white card or red card) if performing construction work?
- ☐ check they have high-risk licences for mobile cranes, telehandlers, forklifts and other plant on site?
- ☐ ensure they are inducted to the site?
- ☐ provide them with the information, instruction, training and supervision they need to work safely?
- ☐ ensure they have access to handwashing and toilet facilities?
- ☐ ensure they have the correct tools, equipment, plant and personal protective equipment (PPE) to do the task safely?
- ☐ involve them in discussions, consultation, pre-start meetings or toolbox talks about health and safety issues?
- ☐ ensure they are covered by your workers' compensation insurance policy?

Figure 13: Construction compliance codes.

# Contracting and subcontracting

If you are a principal contractor or a contractor who subcontracts work to others, do you:

- ☐ consider and check the health and safety performance of the contractors and subcontractors you plan to work with?
- ☐ check the contractors' workers' compensation is current and has a sufficient level of coverage?
- ☐ give employees the health and safety information they must have for the work. For example, ensure employees understand how to identify and report hazards associated with falls, how to use risk control measures implemented for their protection and how to follow emergency procedures.
- ☐ discuss safety and ensure contractors have developed and implemented SWMS for HRCW before starting work?
- ☐ collect and review contractors' crystalline silica hazard control statements for high-risk crystalline silica work (HRCSW) or check to make sure the statement is included in the contractors' SWMS, if they need one?
- ☐ make sure you have provided everything that is required? This includes PPE, safe scaffolds, appropriate plant, toilets and other facilities, in accordance with the relevant compliance codes.
- ☐ monitor subcontractors' performance and record any non-conformance and corrective action?
- ☐ ensure a health and safety coordination plan for construction work is prepared, before the work starts?

A health and safety coordination plan must be prepared if the construction work costs more than $350,000.

Figure 14: Duties of contractors.

# Consultation and toolbox talks

Employers must consult with employees on specific issues. Consultation gives employees and health and safety representatives (HSRs) the opportunity to raise issues, participate and share information about health and safety at work.

☐ If there is a designated work group (DWG) with elected HSRs, are the HSRs involved in all consultation that affects, or is likely to affect, the health and safety of members of their DWG?

Have you discussed:

- ☐ the method of consultation to adopt at the workplace or for the project? For example, HSRs, DWGs or other agreed arrangements.
- ☐ the hazards and risks associated with the task employees are about to perform?
- ☐ proposing changes that may affect the work health and safety of employees?
- ☐ making decisions about work health and safety procedures?
- ☐ the adequacy of facilities for the welfare of employees?

Figure 15: Consultation.

# Hazards checklist

This chapter provides questions to help you manage hazards and risks on the worksite. If you cannot answer 'yes' to a question, take whatever steps are reasonably practicable to manage the health and safety risks.

# Working at heights

The risk of falls associated with working at heights must be eliminated, so far as is reasonably practicable. If the risks cannot be eliminated, they must be controlled so far as is reasonably practicable.

- ☐ Can you avoid working at heights by working from the ground? For example, can the work be redesigned to eliminate or reduce the need to work at heights?
- ☐ If you can't work from the ground, have you ensured the highest level of fall prevention is in place, in line with the hierarchy of control? For example, scaffolds, guard rails or an elevated work platform.
- ☐ Have you planned the work properly and identified suitable precautions to make sure work can be carried out safely? Precautions include providing safe access and egress and the management of hazards such as brittle roofs, open voids, skylights, unprotected edges, adverse weather conditions and site conditions.
- ☐ Have you ensured that appropriate training for working at heights has been delivered to the relevant people?
- ☐ Have you considered dropped object prevention?

Figure 16: Fall prevention.

Figure 17: WorkSafe's scaffold checklist provides practical advice to principal contractors and employers.

# Scaffolds

This scaffold checklist is designed to help identify potential hazards or risks with an erected scaffold on site. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list. For more information and guidance, refer to the Scaffolding: Industry Standard, AS/NZS 1576 and AS 4576. For proprietary scaffold systems, refer to the manufacturer's specifications.

The checklist has been designed to provide practical advice to principal contractors and employers on what they should expect from those responsible for the erection of a safe scaffold. The checklist has also been designed to provide guidance for principal contractors and employers on the maintenance, including alterations, of a safe scaffold.

## Documentation and signs

- ☐ Is there a handover certificate for the scaffold?
- ☐ Is there a current scaffold tag displayed in a visible location? For example, scaffold access points.
- ☐ Does the scaffold tag show the duty rating per bay?
- ☐ Are appropriate danger tags and warning signs such as 'No Entry. Scaffold Incomplete' or 'Danger - Workers Above' in place and in obvious locations to warn people of hazards?
- ☐ Are incomplete scaffolding platforms blocked with a physical barrier?
- ☐ Are scaffold inspections recorded and available upon request? Minimum 30 days.
- ☐ After an inspection, are the identified safety issues addressed to ensure safe use of the scaffold?

## Foundations, soleboards and baseplates

- ☐ Is trenching or other excavation work that could affect the foundation of the scaffold isolated from the vicinity of the scaffold?
- ☐ Have the ground conditions been assessed as suitable for the loads and duty rating of the scaffold before the scaffold is erected?
- ☐ Are soleboards, where required, in good condition, of suitable material and secured or positioned to prevent them being dislodged?
- ☐ Are base plates of suitable dimensions and, where required, positioned centrally on the soleboards?
- ☐ Are the standards sitting plumb and firm on the base plates?

## Isolation from mobile plant, other vehicles and public

- ☐ Is there a system in place to prevent the scaffold being struck by vehicles and plant moving near the scaffold? For example, blocks, para-webbing, hoarding and traffic management.
- ☐ Have risks to pedestrians been controlled?

## Scaffold structure

- ☐ Are the standards plumb through the full height?
- ☐ Are ledgers and transoms level?
- ☐ Is bracing in place at the traverse ends of the scaffold?
- ☐ Is bracing located on the scaffold as per design?
- ☐ Does bracing extend to the full height?
- ☐ Are working load limits for each bay and working deck communicated, identified and maintained? Refer to the handover certificate.
- ☐ Are procedures in place for any alterations?

## Access and egress

- ☐ Is there access and egress to all working platforms, where applicable?
- ☐ If there is access to the structure, has adequate fall protection been installed between the structure and scaffold?

Where access ladders are used:

- ☐ a) are they fitted internally?
- ☐ b) are they adequately secured?
- ☐ c) are they pitched 1:4?
- ☐ d) do they extend 900 mm above the landing?
- ☐ e) are they in good condition and free of defects?
- ☐ f) is edge protection or hatch provided to the void created by the ladder access?

Where access stairs are used:

- ☐ a) are they bearing squarely and adequately on transoms and
- ☐ b) are there no excessive gaps between the platform and transoms?

## Electrical

- ☐ Is scaffolding erected outside of the No Go Zone of overhead power lines? (4.6 m horizontally either side and 5 m vertically below power lines). Refer to the asset owners and Energy Safe.
- ☐ If scaffolding is erected within the No Go Zone, is written permission available from the asset owners?
- ☐ Are insulated hooks available so that leads are elevated rather than being in contact with any scaffold components such as handrails and ledgers, or wound around ties or couplers?

## Containment sheeting

- ☐ Has the scaffold been designed for wind loading on any containment sheeting? For example, hoardings, signage, temporary fencing, wire mesh or shade cloth. Note: For calculation of wind actions, refer to AS/NZS 1170.2.2021.
- ☐ Have sufficient sheeting or brick guards been provided to protect employees or members of the public who might be exposed to a risk of falling materials from the scaffold?
- ☐ Are the fixing ties secure?
- ☐ Is the integrity of the containment sheeting being maintained? For example, no gaps, rips or tears.

## Edge protection

- ☐ Are guardrails, midrails and toeboards installed on all working decks and access platforms from which a person or object could fall, and are they secure?
- ☐ Where the gap between the structure and the scaffold is more than 225 mm, has edge protection been provided? Minimum guard rail and midrail.
- ☐ Where any changes to the structure have occurred, for example, removal of cladding or formwork, is the gap between the structure and the scaffold still less than 225 mm?

## Platforms and decks

- ☐ Are working platforms fully decked? For example, no gaps or missing boards or planks.
- ☐ Are boards and planks secured from, for example, uplift from wind and sliding, when required?
- ☐ Are planks uniform and in good condition? For example, no splits, cracks, knots or bends.
- ☐ Are platforms free of obstructions? For example, electrical leads, building rubble and debris causing tripping hazards.
- ☐ Where materials are stacked on platforms, is there sufficient access provided? Minimum 450 mm wide for persons and tools, minimum 675 mm wide for persons and materials.
- ☐ Where brick guards are used, are bricks or other material stacked below the height of the brick guards?
- ☐ Are the loads on working platforms within their design load?

## Supporting structures

- ☐ Is the supporting structure in good condition?
- ☐ Has the supporting structure been assessed to have adequate strength by a suitably competent person?
- ☐ Are there sufficient controls to prevent deterioration of the supporting structure?
- ☐ Have all measures to strengthen the supporting structure been deemed adequate by a suitably competent person?
- ☐ Is the risk of the supporting structure being overloaded from other sources adequately controlled?

## Ties and connections

- ☐ Is the scaffold secured to the structure with ties?
- ☐ For unclad scaffolding, are ties being maintained at roughly every second lift vertically and every third bay horizontally?
- ☐ Is the scaffold stable when standing on the decks?
- ☐ Is there a system to ensure that if ties need to be removed or relocated, it will not affect the design of the scaffold and the integrity of the structure?
- ☐ Are all components secure? For example, handrail, midrail, transom and ledger connections.

## Hop-up brackets

- ☐ If a hop-up bracket is to be used outside of its intended design on the working face of a scaffold, has this been considered, approved and documented by the manufacturer/supplier or a competent person?
- ☐ Are hop-up brackets being maintained within 500 mm above or below the working platform?
- ☐ Is each hop-up bracket secured in a way that prevents them from moving or planks falling out? For example, with a tie bar.

## Mobile scaffolds

- ☐ Is the supporting surface hard and flat?
- ☐ If the ground surface is unstable, are boards or steel channels used? For example, on dirt, uneven ground, muddy or sloping surface.
- ☐ Is bracing erected correctly and is a plan brace included at the base of the scaffold?
- ☐ Are controls in place for any hazards, for example, floor penetrations, in the operation area of the mobile scaffold?
- ☐ Are the castor wheel locks in working order?
- ☐ Are the castor wheel locks locked before employees work on the scaffold?
- ☐ Where the working platform is over 2 m in height, are handrails, midrails and kick plates being maintained and is there internal ladder access provided?
- ☐ Is the working deck complete? For example, no split decks.
- ☐ Have employees been provided with the necessary information, instruction and training for safe erection, use and dismantling of scaffolds, including mobile scaffolds?

Figure 18: Scaffolding.

Figure 19: Ensure covers protect floor voids and penetrations.

## Working near voids, penetrations, live edges and excavations

- ☐ Are all floor voids and penetrations protected by covers that are secured in place and clearly marked as voids?
- ☐ Are all stairways or ladder access points protected against falls risks by guardrails or suitably designed and installed void or penetration protection systems?

Figure 20: Fall prevention.

# Ladders

- ☐ Is a ladder the right tool for the job? Can you buy or hire alternative equipment that would provide a safer means of access? For example, a mobile scaffold, an elevated work platform, an A-frame or platform ladder.
- ☐ If a ladder is the right tool for the job, is the ladder in good condition and have an industrial rating to a minimum 120 kg?
- ☐ Is the ladder set-up on a flat, stable surface?
- ☐ Do you need ladder safety devices? For example, leg levellers, anti-slip gutter guards and stabilisers.
- ☐ Is the ladder tall enough and able to be situated and positioned so that users don't have to over-reach?
- ☐ Are materials being transported safely? For example, not carried up a ladder. Instead, use a pulley or rope and bucket system to transport materials and do not use a ladder.

## Extension ladders

- ☐ Is the ladder secured at the top and bottom to prevent it slipping sideways and outwards? If this isn't possible, have someone hold it in place while in use.
- ☐ Does the ladder extend at least 1 m or 3 rungs above the landing place?
- ☐ Is the ladder resting against a solid surface that can support it and the person using the ladder?
- ☐ Is the ladder angled at a ratio of 1:4? This means the base of the ladder is 1 m away from the structure for every 4 m of height.

## A-frame ladders

Note: A platform ladder is a safer option than an A-frame ladder. A platform ladder higher than 2 m requires a guardrail to prevent falls of more than 2 m.

- ☐ Is the ladder tall enough so that users don't have to stand on the top 2 rungs? If not, a taller ladder is required.
- ☐ Are all 4 feet of the ladder in contact with the ground and are the locking devices secured?
- ☐ Are both feet and one other point of contact of the user in contact with the ladder? For example, hand, waist or torso. If not, you need a taller ladder or a safer piece of equipment.

Figure 21: Fall prevention.

Figure 22: Edge protection such as guard rails can help control risks from roof work.

# Roofs

- ☐ Has an exclusion zone been set up below the roof work?
- ☐ Are roof employees trained and experienced to recognise the risks of working on roofs?
- ☐ Are roof employees competent to do the work?

## Roofs under construction

- ☐ Is there correctly installed temporary edge protection to stop people or materials falling? For example, scaffold or perimeter guard rails.
- ☐ If it is not reasonably practicable to use higher-order risk controls such as a scaffold or elevated work platform, have you considered other fall prevention devices? For example, work positioning systems and netting.

## Work on roofs

- ☐ Has the angle or pitch of the roof been considered when determining fall prevention measures?
- ☐ Have you identified fragile or brittle roof materials that are not safe to walk on or work near? For example, concrete tiles, cement sheets, asbestos or clear plastic sheeting and skylights.

- ☐ Have you installed protections to stop people falling through fragile or brittle roofs? For example, guard rails, covers, walkways or crawl boards and exclusion zones.
- ☐ Have you installed temporary edge protection to stop employees falling from the edge of the roof? For example, scaffolding or perimeter guard rails.

## Work positioning systems (harnesses)

Work positioning systems can only be used if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks associated with a fall, or to provide physical fall protection such as scaffolds or perimeter guard rails.

Work positioning systems require the correct design, set-up and user behaviour to ensure their effectiveness.

Travel-restraint systems offers a higher level of protection than fall arrest. Travel-restraint systems stops the user from reaching the edge or fall hazard.

Fall arrest systems should only be used as a last resort. Fall arrest systems often cannot be safely used on a single-storey building.

- ☐ Are employees trained and competent in the setting up and safe use of work positioning systems, if required?
- ☐ Has an emergency procedure been developed for work above 2 m and where passive fall prevention devices, work positioning systems, fall arrest systems, ladders or administrative controls are used as a risk control measure?

Figure 23: Fall prevention.

# Electricity and essential services

- ☐ Have you considered geotechnical services?
- ☐ Have you ensured you are using appropriate plant for the work?

## If excavating on private land

- ☐ Have you contacted Before You Dig Australia to identify and assess underground services? **www.byda.com.au**
- ☐ Have you checked and received the relevant plans for services?
- ☐ Have you followed the No Go Zones when working near underground services?
- ☐ Do you have the required permits from asset owners to work in No Go Zones? Note: Potholing may require permission from the asset owner.

## If excavating on public land

- ☐ Have you contacted Before You Dig Australia to identify and assess underground services? **www.byda.com.au**
- ☐ Have you inspected any relevant plans from the landowner?
- ☐ For electrical underground services, have you checked any relevant plans at the meter position?
- ☐ Have you followed the No Go Zones when working near underground services?
- ☐ If applicable, have you potholed to locate other services, for example, gas and telecommunications?
- ☐ Have you checked for asbestos-containing materials? Asbestos-containing materials include electrical switchboards, electrical switches, millboard, cable pits and water pipes.

Figure 24: Installations and infrastructure, Energy Safe Victoria.

## Requirements for underground work

☐ Have you followed the No Go Zones requirements for work near underground services?

No Go Zone requirements for services greater than 66kV or all pipelines licensed under the Pipelines Act -

- **Work outside of 4.5m from the service:** There are no specific requirements other than those described in the OHS Act and OHS Regulations
- **Work between 4.5 m and 3 m from the service:** A registered qualified electrical spotter with current first aid and CPR training is required. This is known as the Spotter Zone.
- **Work within 3 m of the service:** Permission from the relevant network operator (i.e. permit to work) is required and additional preventative measures will need to be taken.

No Go Zone requirements for services less than or equal to 66kV or services not licensed under the Pipelines Act -

- **Work outside of 2 m from the service:** There are no specific requirements other than those described in the OHS Act and OHS Regulations
- **Work between 2 m and 0.5 m from the service:** A registered qualified electrical spotter with current first aid and CPR training is required. This is known as the Spotter Zone.
- **Work within 0.5 m of the service for machinery:** Permission from the relevant network operator (i.e. permit to work) is required and additional preventative measures will need to be taken.
- **Work within 0.3 m of the service for persons:** Permission from the relevant network operator (i.e. permit to work) is required and additional preventative measures will need to be taken.

Figure 25: Guide to undertaking work near underground services.

## Where there are overhead powerlines and mobile plant is being used

☐ Have you followed the No Go Zone requirements?

No Go Zone requirements —

- **Work outside 6.4 m from overhead power lines:** There are no specific requirements other than those described in the OHS Act and OHS Regulations.
- **Work between 3 m and 6.4 m from overhead power lines:** A registered Qualified Electrical Spotter with current first aid and CPR training is required. This is known as the Spotter Zone.
- **Work within 3 m from overhead power lines:** Permission from the relevant network operator is required and additional preventative measures will need to be taken.

☐ For work between 3 m and 6.4 m, has the service provider been contacted?

☐ Has the service provider or asset owner confirmed that the No Go Zone can be entered?

☐ Do you have the required permits from asset owners to work near or in the No Go Zone and can you comply with the conditions?

Figure 26: Control risks from electrocution on construction sites.

## Where scaffolding is erected near overhead powerlines

- ☐ Have you followed the scaffolding No Go Zone requirements?
  - The No Go Zone for scaffolding is 4.6 m to the side and 5 m underneath the powerlines. Any scaffold erection within this No Go Zone requires a permit from the power company.
- ☐ Where there are overhead lines, has the electricity supply been turned off or have other precautions been taken to prevent accidental contact? For example, providing 'tiger tails', 'goal posts' or taped markers and/or barriers as an identifier.
- ☐ Are there any other permits required from asset owners? For example, power, gas, water and telecommunications suppliers or the local council.

## Tools and switchboards

- ☐ For tools that rely on mains power for their operation, is a Residual Current Device used and inspected and tested before use and trip tested monthly?

Are tools, leads and electrical items:

  - ☐ tested and tagged prior to first use and quarterly by a suitably competent person?
  - ☐ well-maintained?
  - ☐ checked before each use for defects and correct dates?
  - ☐ taken out of service if a defect is found?

- ☐ Are temporary switchboards and temporary construction wiring inspected and tested and certified before initial introduction to service and then every 6 months?
- ☐ Are insulated lead stands or hooks used to protect leads from being damaged or creating trip hazards?
- ☐ If there is a switchboard, is it easily accessible?

Figure 27: Electrical.

# Managing traffic, vehicles and mobile plant

- ☐ Are vehicles, mobile plant and pedestrians physically separated by barriers, markings and/or signs?
- ☐ If required, has a qualified person developed a traffic control plan?
- ☐ Have traffic controllers received appropriate information, instruction and training for the task?
- ☐ Can reversing be avoided? If not, are properly trained persons used to help guide and control these movements?
- ☐ Have operators of all mobile plant received proper training, licences and induction in the mobile plant's use?
- ☐ Have mobile plant pre-start checks been done and any issues addressed?
- ☐ Do the operators of mobile cranes, telehandlers, forklifts and other high-risk mobile plant on site hold the relevant high-risk work licence?
- ☐ Are work vehicles and mobile plant well maintained and maintenance records present and up-to-date?
- ☐ If you need to work on or drive across sloping ground, have you checked that the plant and vehicles are safe to use on the slopes, in line with the manufacturer's specifications?
- ☐ Do you check that the required securing pins are in place on excavators fitted with quick hitches?
- ☐ If required, has a geotechnical report been obtained to confirm the ground can take the load exerted by the item of plant? For example, when setting up elevated work platforms, piling rigs, mobile cranes and concrete pumps.

Figure 28: Construction site traffic management safety.

# Site security and protecting the public

- ☐ Have you provided adequate site fencing to prevent unauthorised access to your site? This includes 1.8 m-high fencing.
- ☐ Is your site fencing secured and stable and able to withstand expected loads, such as strong winds? Fencing with signs and shade cloth-type coverings may require additional support to resist wind loadings.
- ☐ Have you provided mandatory construction site signs with the principal contractor's name, contact details and site office location?
- ☐ Is a fire-retardant mesh or fabric required to prevent the spread of materials, dust and debris outside the site?
- ☐ Is the public protected from falling materials?

When work has stopped for the day:

- ☐ is the site fencing secured when no one is on site?
- ☐ have warning entry signs been installed to discourage unauthorised access?
- ☐ have steps been taken to prevent any unauthorised access? For example, removing ladders, blocking off scaffolds and preventing unauthorised tower crane access.
- ☐ are excavations and openings securely covered or fenced off?
- ☐ is all plant immobilised to prevent unauthorised use?
- ☐ are bricks and materials safely stacked and secured to prevent being affected by wind?

# Walkways, access and egress

- ☐ Can everyone get to their place of work safely and work there safely?
- ☐ Are access and egress routes well defined, in good condition and clear of debris and materials?
- ☐ Has suitable edge protection been installed where required?
- ☐ Are floor and wall voids protected and clearly marked with fixed covers, void protection systems or guard railing as appropriate to prevent falls?
- ☐ Is the site tidy and are materials segregated and stored safely?
- ☐ Is there sufficient lighting for access and egress purposes?

Figure 29: Construction site security fencing.

Figure 30: Site security and public access onto housing construction sites.

Figure 31: Excavated trenches are a risk to health and safety.

## Trenches and construction excavations

- ☐ Have you contacted Before you Dig Australia and obtained and kept copies of current underground essential services location and depth information relating to the workplace and adjacent areas?
  **www.byda.com.au**
- ☐ Have you planned, scanned, prepared and potholed before proceeding with work near underground services?
- ☐ Are trenches and excavations secured to prevent unauthorised access, falls and falling objects?
- ☐ Is there a support or protection system in place to prevent collapse where there is a risk of collapse if people enter the excavation? For example, trench shields, shoring, benching or battering, at 1 m intervals.
- ☐ Is a safe method used for putting in the support or protection, without people working in an unsupported trench, if applicable?
- ☐ Is there safe access into and egress out of the excavation?
- ☐ Is the excavation fenced off from unauthorised access and are signs for deep excavation in place?

- ☐ Could the excavation affect the stability of neighbouring structures or services? A suitably competent person, such as a geotechnical engineer, should provide advice when the stability of a neighbouring structure may be affected.
- ☐ Are materials, spoil and mobile plant kept away to prevent loading and potential collapse of the edge of the excavation?
- ☐ Where required, is the excavation regularly inspected by a competent person, such as a geotechnical engineer? For example, after ground movement or heavy rain.
- ☐ Do you have an emergency plan for the rescue of a person in the case of engulfment by soil or other material? This plan should include providing first aid.

Figure 32: Excavation and trenching.

Figure 33: Loading and unloading materials can create health and safety risks.

## Loading and unloading materials

- ☐ Have you planned your method of loading and unloading materials?
- ☐ Is there an exclusion zone around the loading and unloading area?
- ☐ Is there a driver safety zone?
- ☐ Are mechanical aids and other lifting equipment inspected in accordance with the manufacturer's requirements?
- ☐ Are mechanical aids and other lifting equipment well maintained?
- ☐ Before removing straps and stabilisers on the delivery vehicle, have you checked that the load has not moved or destabilised during the journey?
- ☐ Is accessing the back of the vehicle or truck bed necessary?
- ☐ Is there a fall risk and are you controlling it?
- ☐ Do operators of vehicle-loading cranes with a capacity of 10-metre tonnes or more hold a high-risk work licence?
- ☐ Do operators of material hoists or personnel and materials hoists hold the appropriate high-risk work licence?

Figure 34: Preventing injuries when loading and unloading vehicles.

# Hazardous manual handling

Where possible, can you eliminate or, if elimination is not reasonably practicable, reduce:

- ☐ repetitive or sustained force/movement?
- ☐ high or sudden forces?
- ☐ sustained or awkward postures?
- ☐ exposure to vibrations?
- ☐ the nature, size, weight and number of objects being handled?

☐ In your planning, have you considered the work area layout, systems of work and the work environment?

Can you:

- ☐ choose less heavy materials?
- ☐ use fit-for-purpose mechanical aids, for example, cranes, hoists or trolleys?
- ☐ buy ergonomically designed tools and equipment?
- ☐ provide suitable information, training and instruction for the safe use of mechanical aids and other equipment?

Note: You should not rely solely on administrative controls such as instruction or training in lifting techniques to control risks. Such controls may only be relied upon if it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate or reduce the risk of musculoskeletal disorders through other control measures.

Figure 35: Hazardous manual handling compliance code.

# Tools and machinery

- ☐ Are the right tools or machinery being used for the job and are they being used in line with the manufacturer's instructions?
- ☐ Are you complying with the manufacturer's guidelines for inspections, maintenance and repairs?
- ☐ Are the risks posed by moving parts controlled? For example, guarded moving parts.
- ☐ Are any guards fitted adequately interlocked or, if this is not reasonably practicable, secured in a way that requires a tool to remove or alter them?
- ☐ Are tools and machinery maintained in good condition?
- ☐ Are all safety devices operating as per their intended use?
- ☐ Are all operators trained and competent in the use of tools and machinery?
- ☐ Are appropriate controls in place for the safe use of lasers? For example, avoiding magnifying and reflective surfaces, avoiding using at eye level.

Figure 36: Plant compliance code.

# Health hazards

This section provides questions to help you manage hazards and risks on site. If you cannot answer 'yes' to a question, take whatever steps are reasonably practicable to manage the health and safety risks.

Figure 37: Working outdoors presents health and safety risks.

## Sun safety, weather and heat illness

- ☐ Can you organise work times to reduce exposure to the sun during peak UV radiation times?
- ☐ Can you install temporary shade when working in direct sun?
- ☐ Can the workload be modified to minimise the risk of heat illness? For example, changing location, reducing time spent on hot tasks, arranging for more employees, using mechanical aids to reduce exertion, providing extra rest breaks in a cool area.
- ☐ Have you provided sunscreen?
- ☐ Are employees using a combination of sun protection measures? For example, sunscreen, long sleeves, long pants, collared shirts, wide-brimmed hats or legionnaire caps, UV-rated wraparound sunglasses.
- ☐ Is there drinking water available on site?
- ☐ Can heavy physical work be scheduled to cooler times of the day or done in a different way?

Figure 38: Sun protection.

Figure 39: Exposure to asbestos can cause diseases such as mesothelioma, lung cancer and asbestosis.

## Asbestos

☐ Have you identified whether you are working with asbestos or asbestos-containing materials? Properties built before 1990 are more likely to contain asbestos material.

If you are working with asbestos or asbestos-containing materials:

- ☐ have you engaged a licensed asbestos removalist?
- ☐ has the licensed removalist provided you with a copy of their asbestos control plan?
- ☐ have you arranged for a clearance by an independent person with the necessary skills and knowledge following Class A or Class B asbestos removal work?
- ☐ has the independent person provided you with an asbestos clearance certificate?
- ☐ will the asbestos be disposed of appropriately to a licensed landfill?

The licensed asbestos removalist must notify WorkSafe of the asbestos removal work:

- ☐ at least 24 hours before starting asbestos removal work if the total area to be removed is less than 10 square metres of non-friable asbestos-containing material
- ☐ within 24 hours of starting asbestos removal work if the asbestos removal work is undertaken as the result of an unexpected situation. See regulation 299 of the OHS Regulations.
- ☐ at least 5 days before the asbestos removal work starts in all other cases, including where asbestos removal work involves friable asbestos or non-friable asbestos greater than 10 square metres.

*Note: A clearance certificate isn't required for asbestos removal works which only involve non-friable asbestos-containing material which does not exceed 10 square metres.

Figure 40: Asbestos.

Figure 41: Asbestos in Victoria.

# Crystalline silica

Crystalline silica is a natural mineral found in many construction materials.

Common materials and their typical crystalline silica content are:

- ceramic tiles, 5% to 45%
- autoclaved aerated concrete, 20% to 40%
- concrete, less than 30%
- brick, 5% to 15%
- marble, less than 5%
- engineered stone, 1% or more crystalline silica, determined as a weight/weight concentration. Note: Engineered stone is banned in Victoria from 1 July 2024. That is, you cannot work with engineered stone benchtops, panels or slabs, even if you entered a contract before that date.

Exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) can lead to serious health conditions, such as silicosis. Silicosis is an irreversible, incurable and progressive lung disease that can lead to disability and death.

- ☐ Have you identified work activities that meet the definition of a crystalline silica process under OHS Regulation 319B? For example, using a power tool to cut, polish or drill into material containing crystalline silica.
- ☐ Are you undertaking high-risk crystalline silica work (HRCSW)?
- ☐ Have you discussed how RCS risks will be controlled before starting work?
- ☐ Have you prepared a crystalline silica hazard control statement (CSHCS) for HRCSW or incorporated the CSHCS into a SWMS?
- ☐ Have employees doing HRCSW been provided with information, instruction and training in:
  - the health risks associated with exposure to crystalline silica dust?

- the need for and proper use of any risk control measures?
- how the controls will be implemented?

☐ Can you control risks associated with RCS by using the following control measures:

- Eliminating RCS exposure by using other products that do not contain crystalline silica?
- Substituting the materials with those containing less crystalline silica?
- Isolating employees from the RCS? For example, by using a positive-pressure enclosed cabin.
- Using engineering controls? For example, using an on-tool dust extraction system connected to an M- or H-class vacuum, or an on-tool dust suppression system.
- Using administrative controls? For example, the scheduled maintenance of an M- or H-class vacuum, work procedures, signs, information and supervision.
- Using PPE, such as respiratory protective equipment (RPE)?

☐ Have you provided RPE, ensured employees are using it and done fit testing for each employee?

☐ Have you identified your employees' level of exposure to RCS by having air monitoring done within the workplace?

☐ Have you identified the need for a health monitoring program for employees?

☐ Have employees been consulted on the RCS hazard and decisions about risk control measures?

☐ Do you have appropriate crystalline silica waste disposal?

Figure 42: High risk crystalline silica work - Identification and management.

Figure 43: Employers have duties to provide adequate facilities for employees.

## Workplace facilities

- ☐ Have suitable hygienic toilet facilities been provided?
- ☐ Are clean handwashing facilities, water, soap and paper towel provided?
- ☐ Are there amenities provide where employees can take breaks and eat meals?
- ☐ Do employees have access to clean drinking water?
- ☐ Are there suitable first aid facilities and an appropriate number of first aiders readily accessible on-site at all times?

Figure 44: Facilities in construction compliance code.

Figure 45: Workplace facilities and the working environment compliance code.

Figure 46: Facilities on housing sites.

# Hazardous substances and dangerous goods

Hazardous substances are substances that can harm people's health. They may be solids, liquids or gases. In the workplace, they are often in the form of fumes, dusts, mists and vapours.

Dangerous goods are substances that are corrosive, flammable, combustible, explosive, oxidising or water-reactive or have other hazardous properties. Dangerous goods can cause explosions or fires, serious injury, death and large-scale damage.

Dangerous goods and hazardous substances are covered by different laws. Some substances are both hazardous substances and dangerous goods. In this case, both sets of laws apply.

## Hazardous substances

- ☐ Have you identified hazardous substances, for example, acids, cement, concrete, lead, glues, paints?
- ☐ Is there a register that lists all the hazardous substances used, stored and handled on site?
- ☐ Do you have a current safety data sheet (SDS) for all hazardous substances used in the workplace and are the SDS readily available and accessible?
- ☐ Have you identified and implemented control measures to prevent or control exposure to hazardous substances by:
  - doing the work in a different way to completely remove the risk?
  - using a less hazardous substance?
  - using tools fitted with extraction devices?
  - using tools fitted with water suppression?
  - using mechanical air ventilation?
  - installing warning signs to show where work involving hazardous substances is taking place?

- ☐ Have employees received information and training so they know what the risks are and what they need to do to avoid those risks?
- ☐ Is PPE, RPE and any other safety equipment provided and appropriate for the task?
- ☐ Do you have procedures and suitable PPE to prevent contact with wet cement? Wet cement can cause dermatitis and cement burns.
- ☐ Have you arranged health monitoring for employees exposed to certain hazardous substances such as:
  - lead, where processes such as lead paint stripping are occurring?
  - crystalline silica, where airborne crystalline silica dust exposure to employees is reasonably likely to have an adverse effect on the employees' health?
- ☐ Are there adequate wash facilities available?
- ☐ Are hazardous substances stored and disposed of appropriately?
- ☐ Has a spill kit been provided where required?

Figure 47: Hazardous substances compliance code.

## Welding fumes

Exposure to welding fumes is known to cause short and long-term health effects. Short-term effects include respiratory irritation. Long-effects include lung and kidney cancer.

☐ Have you identified and implemented control measures to prevent or control exposure to welding fumes? Control measures include:

- using other processes to eliminate the need to weld, such as using nuts and bolts
- substituting with a process that generates fewer welding fumes, for example, MIG welding instead of manual metal arc welding
- using tools fitted with on-torch fume extraction
- using mechanical local exhaust ventilation
- using RPE.

Figure 48: Controlling exposure to welding fumes.

Figure 49: Hazardous substances compliance code.

## Dangerous goods

- ☐ Have you identified dangerous goods? For example, corrosive, flammable, combustible, explosive, oxidising or water-reactive goods, including gas cylinders.
- ☐ Is there a register that lists all dangerous goods used, stored and handled at your premises?
- ☐ Do you have a current SDS for any dangerous goods used?
- ☐ Are SDS readily available and accessible?

Have you identified and implemented control measures to eliminate or reduce exposure to dangerous goods by doing the following:

- ☐ Ensuring correct storage of gas cylinders?
- ☐ Ensuring gas cylinders are correctly transported to site?
- ☐ Ensuring cylinders are secured so they cannot fall over and stored in the upright position?
- ☐ Ensuring dangerous goods are stored away from incompatible substances? For example, oxidising gas such as oxygen cannot be stored next to flammable gas and flammable liquids such as thinners cannot be stored next to oxidisers such as hydrogen peroxide.
- ☐ Ensuring ignition sources are removed and activity stopped when using flammable liquids?

- ☐ Have employees received information and training so they know what the risks are and what they need to do to avoid those risks?
- ☐ Is suitable PPE, RPE and any other safety equipment provided?
- ☐ Are there adequate wash facilities available?
- ☐ Are dangerous goods stored and disposed of appropriately?
- ☐ Has a spill kit been provided?

Figure 50: Dangerous goods.

# Noise

☐ Have you identified and assessed employees' exposure to noise to determine whether the exposure standard is or may be exceeded, based on noise level and duration?

If the exposure standard is exceeded:

- ☐ can the noise be reduced by selecting quieter plant or engineering controls? For example, fitting breakers and other plant or machinery with silencers or enclosing the noise source.
- ☐ have employees had information and training on the hazards associated with noise exposure, as well as how to correctly use risk control measures?
- ☐ are people not involved in the work kept away from the source of the noise?
- ☐ is suitable hearing protection provided and worn in noisy areas?
- ☐ have hearing protection zones been identified and signed appropriately?
- ☐ have you provided audiometric testing, including baseline testing, for employees who must wear hearing protectors to reduce exposure to high levels of noise? This includes testing within the first 3 months after starting work that requires hearing protection and at least every 2 years for employees exposed to noise levels exceeding the exposure standard.

Figure 51: Noise compliance code.

Figure 52: Personal protective equipment.

## Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- ☐ Is suitable PPE provided to protect employees from the hazards identified in the tasks they are performing? This may include hard hats, safety shoes and hand, eye and ear protection.
- ☐ Have employees received information, instruction or training in the safe use, care and storage of PPE, where required? For example, RPE and safety harnesses.
- ☐ Do employees wear their PPE and do they wear it correctly so that it fits? This includes, for example, hard hats, safety boots and hand, eye and ear protection.

# Psychological health

Employers must provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health. They must do this so far as is reasonably practicable. The definition of health under the OHS Act includes psychological health.

Workplace hazards can include physical hazards and psychosocial hazards. Psychosocial hazards are also known as work-related factors. They can cause a person to experience a negative psychological response that creates a risk to their health.

Employees are likely to be exposed to a combination of work-related factors. Some of these may always be present, while others occur occasionally.

Psychosocial hazards include, for example:

- high and low job demands
- low job control
- poor environmental conditions
- low recognition and reward
- bullying
- harassment
- violence
- poor levels of support by management, supervisors and colleagues.

☐ Have you collaborated and consulted with employees about psychosocial hazards?

☐ Have you identified the psychosocial hazards that can impact health and safety? For example, through an employee survey.

☐ Have you assessed whether the identified psychosocial hazards pose a risk to health or safety?

☐ Have you eliminated or reduced the risk associated with the psychosocial hazards by putting control measures in place?

- ☐ Do you have a system in place to monitor, review and revise risk control measures to ensure they are:
  - working as planned
  - effectively controlling risks to psychological health?
- ☐ Do you have an effective system in place for reporting, responding to and investigating a report of a psychosocial hazard or incident?
- ☐ Do you provide information, instruction and training on identifying and controlling psychosocial hazards and risks?
- ☐ Are employees aware of resources and support available? For example, through an employee assistance program.

Figure 53: Mental health.

Figure 54: Work-related fatigue can lead to physical, mental or emotional exhaustion.

## Workloads and fatigue

- ☐ Is work scheduled to allow enough time for completion without rushing?
- ☐ Are workloads practical and manageable?
- ☐ When work is being scheduled, is consideration given to any workflow changes? For example, machinery breakdowns or unplanned absences.
- ☐ Is fit-for-purpose plant, machinery and equipment used to reduce physical workloads?

Figure 55: Work-related fatigue.

## Disclaimer

The information presented in this pocket guide to construction safety is intended for general use only. It should not be viewed as a definitive guide to the law and should be read in conjunction with the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017.

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**WSV4000/01/03.24**