

Building and Construction Industry Workplace Health and Safety Guide

Construction work reforms

Working in the building and construction industry is a risky business. Contractors, subcontractors and their workers face risks from hazards that must be managed to prevent death, injury and illness.

The *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* clearly sets out how certain risks for construction work must be managed.

The regulations cover –

- principal contractor construction safety plans;
- work method statements for high-risk construction activities and prescribed activities such as demolition work and asbestos removal work;
- general and site-specific induction;
- signs;
- housekeeping practices;
- safety of plant provided for common use;
- excavations (including trenches);
- working at heights (including work on roofs, from ladders and trestle ladder platforms, and work to erect or dismantle scaffolding);
- protecting people from falling objects;
- hazardous substances;
- workplace amenities; and
- first aid.

On-the-spot fines are attached to the regulations. The amount of the fines reflects the severity of the breach.

Definitions

Construction work means –

- (a) erection, construction, extension, alteration, conversion, fit-out, commission, renovation, repair, refurbishment, disassembly or decommissioning of a structure or part of a structure;
- (b) work connected with site preparation, excavation and landscaping for work mentioned in (a);
- (c) assembling or installing prefabricated components to form a structure, or part of a structure – for work mentioned (a);
- (d) disassembling prefabricated components for work mentioned in (a) where the components formed a structure or part of a structure immediately before they were disassembled; and
- (e) prescribed activities (demolition work and asbestos removal work).

High risk construction activity means - an activity that is part of construction work and –

- (a) the activity involves a person—
 - (i) entering a trench that is more than 1.5m deep; or
 - (ii) using explosives; or
 - (iii) using a confined space; or
 - (iv) using a hazardous substance; or
- (b) during the activity, a person could fall—
 - (i) if the activity is housing construction work—at least 3m; or
 - (ii) if the activity is not housing construction work—at least 2m; or
- (c) the activity is performed on a roof with a pitch of more than 26°; or
- (d) the activity is—
 - (i) a prescribed activity; or
 - (ii) demolition work that is not a prescribed activity; or
- (e) the activity consists of—
 - (i) tilt-up and precast construction work; or
 - (ii) structural alterations that require temporary support to prevent collapse; or
 - (iii) the movement of powered mobile plant at the workplace; or
 - i) *Examples for subparagraph (iii)—*
 - ii) • the movement of forklifts at the workplace
 - iii) • the interaction of rollers with other powered mobile plant at the workplace
 - iv) • the interaction of graders with persons at the workplace
 - (iv) work on a telecommunications tower; or
 - (v) work in, over or adjacent to water where there is a risk of drowning; or
 - (vi) work on, or adjacent to, a road or railway; or
 - (vii) work on or near a pressurised gas distribution mains and consumer piping; or
 - (viii) work on or near a chemical, fuel or refrigerant line; or
 - (ix) work near an exposed energised electrical installation; or
 - (x) work in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere; or
 - (xi) work in an area where there are artificial extremes of temperature; or
- (f) the principal contractor for the construction work reasonably believes the activity could result in death or bodily harm.

Housing construction work means - construction work to erect, construct, extend or structurally alter –

- any of the following dwellings that is not located above or below another dwelling or another part of a building, other than a private garage –
 - a detached house;
 - an attached dwelling, separated from the dwelling to which it is attached by a fire-resisting wall, for example, a terrace house or town house;
 - a boarding house, guest house, hostel or similar building with a floor area of not more than 300m²; or
- a building that is not designed for habitation but is ancillary to one of the above, e.g. a private garage or carport.

Demolition work means - the demolition or systematic dismantling of a structure, or part of a structure, not including the systematic dismantling of –

- a part of a structure for alteration, maintenance, remodelling or repair; or
- formwork, falsework, scaffold or other construction designed or used to provide support, access or containment during construction.

Civil construction work means - construction work in relation to any of the following structures –

- a structure mentioned in paragraph (b), (c) or (d) of the definition of “structure” in the Act (e.g, underground works, roads, railway lines, sewerage or drainage systems, footpaths and driveways);
- a bridge;
- a pumping station;
- a refinery; and
- a telecommunications structure.

Structure means –

- (a) a building, a steel or reinforced concrete construction, wall, mast, tower, pylon, structural cable or telecommunications structure; or
- (b) an underground works (including shafts and tunnels), pipe, pipeline, sea defence works, river works, earthworks or earth retaining construction or other construction designed to preserve or alter a natural feature; or
- (c) a road or highway, footpath or driveway, railway line or siding, tramway line, airfield, dock or harbour, water storage or supply system (including a constructed lagoon), sewerage or drainage system, electricity or gas generation facility, transmission or distribution facility, gasholder, park or recreation ground (including, for example, a golf course, playing field, racecourse or swimming pool); or
- (d) production, storage or distribution facilities for heavy industries; or
- (e) fixed plant; or
- (f) a ship or submarine; or
- (g) formwork, falsework, scaffold or other construction designed or used to provide support, access or containment during construction work.

Relevant person means a person who conducts a business or undertaking –

- whether or not the person conducts the business or undertaking as an employer, self-employed person or otherwise;
- whether or not the business or undertaking is conducted for gain or reward; and
- whether or not a person works on a voluntary basis.

A ‘relevant person’ has an obligation to ensure the workplace health and safety of themselves, their workers and others is not affected by the conduct of their business or undertaking.

What a principal contractor must do before work starts

Before construction work starts, a principal contractor must –

- Prepare a construction safety plan (where required) and make sure it is available for inspection;
- Ensure work method statements for “high risk construction activities” are prepared and provided by the relevant person;
- Sight general induction evidence of relevant persons;
- Give site specific induction (other than for housing construction work);
- Not allow a person to perform a prescribed activity or prescribed occupation unless they have the appropriate authority.
- Obtain and provide information about underground services;
- Ensure appropriate signage is erected;
- For objects that might fall:
 - Housing and civil construction work – assess the risk, ensure control measures are implemented.
 - Construction work that is not housing or civil construction work – ensure a relevant person does certain things and that the principal contractor erects barricading and/or hoarding and perimeter containment screening and adjoining areas are closed where necessary.

Note: A ‘relevant person’ must also ensure certain things are done before construction work can start. Refer to the guide for further information on principal contractors and relevant persons.

Construction safety plans

A principal contractor must prepare a construction safety plan before construction work starts. The plan must state –

- the address where the construction work will be done;
- the name and address of the principal contractor;
- the principal contractor's ABN;
- whether there is a WHS committee;
- whether there is a WHS Officer appointed;
- the expected start date;
- the estimated duration of the work;
- the type of construction work to be done;
- plant provided for common use;
- the site rules;
- the risks the principal contractor is obligated to manage;
- the proposed control measures for the risks;
- how the controls will be used;
- the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing controls;
- the emergency procedures; and
- the strategies to manage risks to people using areas surrounding the construction work.

The plan must be written so it is easy to understand, and be signed and dated by the principal contractor. It must be available for the length of the project.

The principal contractor must sign and date any work method statements that have been received and keep them with the plan, as well as monitor their implementation.

The principal contractor must not allow housing construction work to start unless the principal contractor or someone acting for the principal contractor has –

- given the relevant person a copy of the current safety plan; or
- discussed aspects of the plan that relate to the relevant person's work.

The principal contractor must not allow construction work other than housing construction work to start unless the current safety plan is readily available for inspection at the workplace.

The plan must be amended if there are changes in how risks will be managed. The principal contractor must inform any affected relevant persons of the change.

Work method statements

Work method statements help plan how certain activities will be carried out safely.

A relevant person performing high risk construction work needs to prepare a work method statement before starting the work.

The work method statement must take into account the principal contractor's construction safety plan and also state –

- the high-risk construction activity;
- the person's ABN;
- the control measures to be used;
- the way the activity will be performed;
- how the control measures will be monitored and reviewed; and
- any relevant prescribed occupations.

The work method statement for demolition work or asbestos removal must also –

- state the certificate number to perform the activity;
- state arrangements for appropriate training and supervision; and
- take account of AS 2601 for demolition work.

Work method statements must be easy to understand, signed and dated.

The work method statement must be amended if there is a change in the activity and a copy must be given to the principal contractor who must sign and date the work method statement. All persons affected by changes must be advised of amendments to the work method statement.

The work method statement must be readily available for inspection. It must also be reviewed each year and amended if necessary.

General induction

General induction provides an opportunity for people working in the industry to gain some understanding of the types of hazards likely to be found when doing construction work and the way risks from these hazards should be managed.

Relevant persons and workers must hold general induction evidence before construction work is started. General induction is not required for construction work to repair a structure that is fixed plant, a ship or submarine.

General induction evidence means a statement of attainment or induction card issued by a Registered Training Organisation for successfully completing course 30215QLD – Course in general safety induction (construction industry).

Phone **1300 369 935** for information on organisations approved to deliver the course.

Site-specific induction

Having mechanisms in place at the workplace to ensure people are aware of the specific procedures and rules for the site will help minimise the risk of death, injury or illness.

Site-specific induction is not necessary for people doing housing construction work.

It will be important for the contents of the principal contractor's construction safety plan to be communicated effectively even where site-specific induction is not given.

A principal contractor must ensure a person has had a site-specific induction before that person starts construction work.

The principal contractor must ensure a person entering a part of the workplace where construction work is being done –

- has been given a site-specific induction; or
- is accompanied by the principal contractor or someone who has been given a site-specific induction.

The induction needs to address the contents of the construction safety plan.

The principal contractor must make a record of the people inducted and the date it was given. The record must be kept for the duration of the construction work.

Signs

Before construction work starts, a principal contractor must erect adequate general safety signs to indicate –

- the nature of the workplace; and
- that unauthorised entry is not allowed; and
- any circumstances in which the workplace or the adjoining area must not be used e.g. 'Do not enter when light is flashing'.

These signs must be kept in good condition.

A relevant person must erect general safety signs and keep them in good condition, except where it is the responsibility of the principal contractor.

Safe housekeeping practices

Principal contractors play an important role in ensuring the orderly conduct of construction work at a workplace. The principal contractor must implement and maintain safe housekeeping practices, including –

- appropriate, safe and clear entry to and exit from the workplace;
- safe systems for collecting, storing and disposing of excess or waste materials; and
- adequate space for the storage of materials and plant.

Examples of establishing and maintaining an orderly workplace environment include –

- installing and maintaining adequate entry and exit lighting; and
- emergency and evacuation signage and lighting.

A relevant person must implement and maintain safe housekeeping practices that apply to their work. A relevant person must also make any protruding objects safe, e.g. removing or bending over exposed nails or capping vertical reinforcing steel.

Relevant persons who are employers must ensure all their workers on site are instructed to follow the safe housekeeping practices.

Common plant

Common plant is plant provided by the principal contractor for use by any persons at the workplace.

A principal contractor must ensure common plant is safe for the purpose for which it is provided and that it is maintained. The principal contractor must comply with any requirements about the plant in the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997*.

A relevant person using common plant must not alter or otherwise interfere with the plant.

Excavations (including underground services)

Before excavation work is carried out, the principal contractor for the construction work must –

- find out what underground services exist;
- obtain relevant information about the service (location, type, depth, restrictions to be followed);
- record the information in writing;
- give the information to the relevant persons who are to do the work; and
- keep the recorded information until the construction work ends.

Dial 1100 Before You Dig is a useful service.

A relevant person must not start excavation work unless the principal contractor has either advised there are no underground services or, if they do exist, has given the relevant person the prescribed information. The relevant person must –

- consider the information;
- follow any reasonable restrictions; and
- implement necessary control measures.

Where there is no principal contractor, the relevant person has the principal contractor's obligations about underground services.

A relevant person is responsible for managing the risks associated with –

- an excavation collapsing;

- objects falling into an excavation;
- a person falling into an excavation; and
- exposure to carbon monoxide or other air impurities in an excavation.

A barricade or hoarding at least 900mm must be erected around an excavation unless it is not practicable or no persons are likely to be in the area of the excavation.

A relevant person must implement any control measures necessary to prevent risk from the collapse of another structure such as an adjoining building or road.

Trenches

Where a trench is at least 1 metre deep, a relevant person must erect a barricade at least 900mm high around the trench unless it is not practicable; or only persons involved with the trench will be in the area; or another form of barrier exists, eg, excavated materials near the trench.

If a person is entering a trench more than 1.5 metres deep, a relevant person must ensure the trench –

- has shoring or shielding;
- is benched – not higher than it is wide and no vertical face exceeding 1.5 metres;
- is battered – angle not exceeding 45° and no vertical face exceeding 1.5 metres; or
- is approved in writing by a geo-technical engineer as safe to work in.

Written approval to vary the benching and battering requirements must be obtained from a geo-technical engineer. The approval must be kept on site at all times.

Ladders used for access must be no more than 9 metres apart in the area of the trench where work will be carried out.

Refer to Part 17 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* for more details about trenching.

Work at heights (excluding work on ladders or trestle ladder platforms and scaffolding work)

Falling from a height is one of the most frequent causes of injury in the building and construction industry and the risk of falling during construction work must be managed regardless of height at which work is being done.

Risks must be managed if a person could fall less than 3 metres (housing construction work), 2 metres (other construction work) or if work is on a roof surface or partly completed roof surface, with a slope not over 26°.

Hazards that may present a risk from a fall include –

- vertical reinforcing steel, the edge of a rubbish skip, a picket fence, or a stack of bricks below workers;
- unsheathed floor bearers and joists 2 metres below workers; and
- working on a brittle roof.

Factors such as the type of activity being carried out should be taken into consideration to establish the degree of risk.

Control measures used to manage risks must comply with regulatory requirements.

A relevant person carrying out work above 3 metres (housing construction), 2 metres (other construction) or if work is on a roof surface or partly completed roof surface, with a slope over 26° must –

- prevent a fall; or
- if prevention is not practicable, arrest the fall and prevent or minimise the risk of death or injury from the arrest of the fall.

The control measures could include –

- edge protection;
- fall protection cover (includes an enclosed environment);
- fall arresting platform;
- travel restraint system;
- fall arrest harness system; or
- industrial safety net.

Refer to Part 17 of the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* for the specific requirements for these controls.

Single or extension ladders

A relevant person must prevent or minimise risks from using a ladder.

Single or extension ladders may only be used to –

- gain access; or
- carry out permitted work – where the material or equipment being carried does not restrict movement or cause loss of balance; the trunk

of the body remains centred on the ladder; and equipment can be used with one hand (unless a control to prevent a fall is used).

A person using a ladder for access or permitted work must either –

- have 3 points of substantial contact with the ladder or a stable object, eg, standing on the ladder with 2 feet while holding a fascia board or timber stud;
- prevent falls with a control measure, e.g., a pole strap; or
- use a fall-arrest harness system (not attached to the ladder).

The ladder must have a load rating of not less than 120kg and be –

- secured against movement at or near its top or bottom, e.g., by tying or clamping;
- manufactured for industrial use;
- used only for the designed purpose;
- not more than 6.1 metres for a single ladder;
- not more than 9.2 metres for an extension ladder used for electrical work or 7.5 metres for other work;
- on a firm and stable surface;
- erected at an angle between 70° and 80°; and
- extended at least 1 metre above a surface being accessed.

Trestle ladder platforms

A relevant person must prevent or minimise risks from working on a platform supported by a trestle ladder.

Platforms used on trestle ladders below 3 metres for housing construction work or 2 metres for other construction work must be 450mm unless the work is light work. Examples of light work include –

- painting;
- installing a roof gutter, air-conditioning duct, metal fascia or lighting;
- placing pine roof trusses in position;
- performing inspections or tests; and
- installing an electrical connection.

Fixing plaster board sheeting to an internal stairwell void, fixing cladding to a gable end of a roof or using a medium or heavy duty angle grinder or circular saw are not considered light work.

For work on a trestle ladder at 3 metres or more for housing construction work or 2 metres or more for other construction works –

- the trestle ladder must have edge protection along the outer length of the platform;
- control measures must be put in place where -
 - there is a risk of a person falling off the edge of each end of the platform; or
 - the gap between the inner edge of the platform and the face of a building/structure is greater than 225mm;

- each trestle ladder must be secured to prevent it moving, e.g., tying the ladder to a sturdy wall or bracing it to the ground;
- the platform must have an unobstructed surface width of 450mm; and
- be no higher than 5 metres.

Erecting and dismantling of scaffolding

If a relevant person intends erecting or dismantling scaffolding and there is a risk of falling 3 metres or more in housing construction work or 2 metres or more in other construction work, all persons must –

- be prevented from falling; or
- use a fall arrest harness system; or
- immediately install platforms, edge protection and a means of access as each level is erected and retain a full deck of platform until the platforms are transferred.

Falling objects

The Regulation applies to construction work if an object could fall on or otherwise hit persons during the work. A principal contractor has an obligation for falling objects. Where there is no principal contractor, a relevant person has the same obligations.

Housing and civil construction work

A principal contractor must assess the risk from falling objects and use controls to prevent or minimise the risks.

The controls chosen must comply with any regulatory requirements.

Construction work (other than housing and civil construction work)

A principal contractor must ensure that –

- a relevant person identifies and decides on the line at which barricading and hoarding is to be erected, and measures the angle between the highest point where work is to be carried out and the line where the control will be put
- before work starts –
 - barricade or hoarding at least 900mm high is erected if the angle is not more than 15°;
 - hoarding at least 1800mm high is erected if the angle is greater than 15° and not more than 30°;
 - fully sheeted hoarding at least 1800mm high is erected if the angle is > 30° but < 75°; or
 - fully sheeted hoarding at least 1800mm high or a gantry is erected if the angle is > 75°.

If the angle is equal to or more than 75° and the work is not demolition work or work erecting or dismantling formwork on or for a structure, one of the following additional controls must be used -

- a gantry is erected; or
- the adjoining area is enclosed; or
- a catch platform with perimeter containment screening is installed.

Demolition work or erecting or dismantling formwork

The principal contractor must close the adjoining area or erect perimeter containment screening along each part of the structure from which an object could fall.

However, for demolition work, if permission to close the adjoining area is withheld and perimeter containment screening can not be erected, the principal contractor must ensure that another control measure is implemented to prevent objects falling on or otherwise hitting persons.

Refer to Part 17 of the Regulation for specific requirements on control measures to prevent objects falling on or otherwise hitting persons.

Hazardous substances

A principal contractor must keep a register of all hazardous substances to be used at the workplace and record the necessary information in the register as soon as reasonably practicable. The register must contain –

- the name of any relevant person proposing to use a hazardous substance at the workplace; and
- a copy of the current MSDS.

The principal contractor must allow anyone working at the workplace to inspect the register at any reasonable time.

Relevant persons must give the principal contractor –

- notice that they or their workers will be using a hazardous substance; and
- a copy of the current MSDS.

Construction workplace amenities

A principal contractor must ensure workers have reasonable access to a room or sheltered area to eat meals or take breaks. The area must –

- present no health or safety risk;
- be hygienic; and
- if there are 15 or more workers at the site, have adequate space, seating and facilities for washing and storing utensils, boiling water and storing food in a cool place.

Principal contractors must ensure workers have reasonable access to toilets. Reasonable access for civil construction work would be a toilet in the site compound's boundaries. For other construction work, within the site boundaries is sufficient.

There must be 1 toilet available for each 15, or part number of workers.

A toilet connected to sewerage, a septic system, a pump-out holding tank storage type system ("connected") or a portable toilet is acceptable for a

workplace with fewer than 15 workers. However, if the number of the workers increases and the toilet provided was portable, it must be replaced by a connected toilet within 2 weeks after the number of workers has increased.

A workplace with 4 or more levels must have a toilet on the ground and fourth floor and every 3rd floor thereafter.

Toilets must be –

- in a cubicle or room fitted with a door and located in a position that allows privacy;
- have fresh air; and
- if used by female construction workers – be equipped with sanitary disposal facilities and separated so that urinals are not visible.

The principal contractor must ensure workers have access to washing facilities. The facilities must be separate from toilets if there are no separate toilet facilities for females.

Examples of washing facilities include –

- a hose at a housing construction site;
- a water container with a tap at a road construction site; and
- wash basins provided with portable or connected toilets at a high rise building construction site.

A relevant person who is an employer must ensure workers have access to drinking water that has been supplied by the principal contractor from a source other than toilet, hand or face washing facilities. Reasonable access for a housing construction site would be within 30 metres from where the work is being carried out and for a high rise building, access on the ground level and every second level of the building.

First Aid

A relevant person is responsible for ensuring there is reasonable access to appropriate and adequate first aid equipment for themselves, and if the relevant person is an employer, for their workers as well. The equipment must be maintained in a hygienic, safe and serviceable condition.

Regional offices

Location	Street address	Postal address	Fax
Ayr	193 Queen Street Ayr Qld 4807	PO Box 639 Ayr Qld 4807	07 4761 2005
Brisbane	75 William Street Brisbane Qld 4000	PO Box 69 Brisbane Qld 4001	07 3225 1540
Brisbane North	Level 4, Lutwyche Shopping Centre 543 Lutwyche Road Lutwyche Qld 4030	PO Box 820 Lutwyche Qld 4030	07 3247 9426
Brisbane South	Level 2, Block C 643 Kessels Road Mt Gravatt Qld 4122	PO Box 6500 Upper Mt Gravatt Qld 4122	07 3216 8431
Bundaberg	16 Quay Street Bundaberg Qld 4670	Locked mail bag 3955 Bundaberg Qld 4670	07 4153 1207
Cairns	10-12 McLeod Street Cairns Qld 4870	PO Box 2465 Cairns Qld 4870	07 4048 1493
Emerald	Shop 6, Clerana Centre Cnr Anakie & Clermont Streets Emerald Qld 4720	PO Box 1814 Emerald Qld 4720	07 4982 3756
Gladstone	Level 2 Government Building, Cnr Oaka Lane and Roseberry Street Gladstone Qld 4680	Locked mail bag 15 Gladstone Qld 4680	07 4972 6196
Gold Coast	Level 1, 10 Cloyne	Locked mail bag	07 5583 5060

	Rd, Southport Qld 4215	91 Southport Qld 4215	
Gympie (Industrial relations only)	Cnr Lawrence and Mellor Streets Gympie Qld 4570	PO Box 49 Gympie Qld 4570	07 5482 8496
Innisfail (Workplace health and safety only)	12 Fitzgerald Esplanade Innisfail Qld 4860	PO Box 558 Innisfail Qld 4860	07 4061 4371
Ipswich	Level 1, Ipswich Courthouse, Cnr East and Limestone Streets Ipswich Qld 4305	PO Box 226 Ipswich Qld 4305	07 3202 1018
Logan	Level 1, Wembley Place 91 Wembley Road Logan Central Qld 4114	PO Box 829 Woodridge Qld 4114	07 3287 8333
Mackay	Floor 1, Post Office Square, Cnr Gordon and Sydney Streets Mackay Qld 4740	Locked mail bag 1 Mackay Qld 4740	07 4967 4477
Maryborough	319-325 Kent Street Maryborough Qld 4650	Locked mail bag 63 Maryborough Qld 4650	07 4123 1704
Mount Isa	75 Camooweal Street Mount Isa Qld 4825	PO Box 2249 Mount Isa Qld 4825	07 4743 8122
Nambour	Floor 1, Centenary Square Building 52-64 Currie Street Nambour Qld 4560	PO Box 501 Nambour Qld 4560	07 5470 8874
Roma	116 McDowall Street Roma Qld 4455	PO Box 697 Roma Qld 4455	07 4622 4072

Rockhampton	Level 2, State Government Building 209 Bolsover Street Rockhampton Qld 4700	Locked mail bag 7 Rockhampton Qld 4700	07 4938 4155
Thursday Island (Workplace health and safety only)	98 Aplin Road Thursday Island Qld 4875	PO Box 341 Thursday Island Qld 4875	07 4069 2438
Toowoomba	Level 1, James Cook Centre, Cnr Herries and Ruthven Streets Toowoomba Qld 4350	PO Box 234, Toowoomba Qld 4350	07 4687 2877
Townsville	254 Ross River Road Aitkenvale Qld 4814	Locked Mail Bag 15, Aitkenvale Qld 4814	07 4760 7981
Warwick (Industrial relations only)	Cnr Guy and Fitzroy Streets Warwick Qld 4370	PO Box 57 Warwick Qld 4370	07 4661 9674

Information about how to manage hazards in the building and construction industry can be found in the *Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997* and relevant codes of practice.

For more information
Ph: 1300 369 915