

Safe Work Method Statement

(SWMS) (01/2018.1)

RISK MANAGEMENT & SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENTS

There are three major concepts involved in preparing a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) - hazards, risks and controls (these are explained in more detail below).

Preparing a SWMS is not really that difficult - quite often it simply involves writing down on paper what you're already doing on site.

WHAT IS RISK MANAGEMENT

There are three major concepts involved in preparing a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) - hazards, risks and controls (these are explained in more details the name suggests, it is a process for managing risks. It involves a number of steps which include:

1. Identifying the hazards
2. Assessing the risks associated with the hazards
3. Deciding on control measures
4. Implementing the control measures
5. Monitoring and reviewing the control measures

Risk management is an ongoing process, so you will need to regularly revisit your SWMS and go through each of the steps to ensure you haven't missed any risks and hazards throughout the work process.

WHAT IS A HAZARD?

A potential source of harm. Some experts prefer to think about hazards in terms of an energy source. Examples include heat, electricity, gravity, chemical etc.

WHAT IS A RISK?

The likelihood of being harmed as a result of exposure to the hazard. Examples include the risk of being burned, electrocuted, falling from heights, inhaling toxic vapours, etc.

WHAT IS A CONTROL?

An action taken to eliminate, minimise or reduce a risk.

HAZARDS, RISKS AND CONTROLS

Below are some examples of hazards, risks and controls in the construction environment:

Activity	Hazard	Risk	Control
Sheeting a roof	Gravity	Falling from heights	Scaffolding, edge protection, harness
Brazing copper pipes	Heat	Burns	Fire-retardant clothing, heat screens and shields, safety goggles
Installing light fittings	Electricity	Electrocution	Isolate power source, insulated equipment
Painting with enamel paints	Chemical	Injury/illness due to inhalation, consumption or skin contact	Use acrylic (water-based) paints which are less hazardous than enamels (oil-based)
Using a circular saw	Mechanical	Lacerations/amputations due to contact with blade	Ensure guards are fitted and working
Working outdoors	UV radiation	Sunburn, skin cancer, eye damage	SPF 50+ rated work clothes, hat, sunglasses, sunscreen

ASSESSING RISKS ON THE JOB

Once you have determined what the risk actually is (e.g. falling from heights), you need to classify it as high, medium or low risk. One method of doing this is by referring to the risk tables.

For each risk, think about what could happen if one of your workers is exposed to the risk and select the most probable consequence from the risk assessment table.

Next, select the most appropriate category from the 'likelihood' column according to how likely you think it may be that the consequence will occur.

Compare your chosen categories of consequences and likelihood in the risk matrix table, then check the number against the risk rating. This will tell you whether the risk is high, medium or low.

Risk assessment			
Consequence		Likelihood	
Minor	First aid treatment	Almost certain	Expected to occur in most circumstances
Moderate	Medical treatment/ lost time injury	Likely	Probably will occur in most circumstances
Major	Extensive injuries/ serious lost time injury	Possible	Could occur at some time
Catastrophic	Permanent disability and death	Rare	May occur only in exceptional circumstances

Note that you do not have to use the tables to determine the level of risk. Sometimes, your workers will have a better understanding of whether something is high, medium or low risk. The tables are simple a tool to help you do this.

Risk matrix					
		Consequence			
		Catastrophic	Major	Moderate	Minor
Likelihood	Almost certain	1	1	2	2
	Likely	1	1	2	2
	Possible	2	2	3	3
	Rare	2	2	3	3

Risk rating					
High Risk	1	Medium Risk	2	Low Risk	3

SOME BASIC GROUND RULES

1. Involve your workers in preparing the SWMS, particularly the more experienced ones. If you have a WHS coordinator or health and safety representatives, make sure you consult with them as well.
2. If your work is being done alongside other workers and equipment, which present other risks to your own workers, you should also consult with the relevant subcontractors about their SWMS's, to make sure there is no conflicting information about how these risks will be managed.
3. The SWMS must be:
 - Specific to the job site
 - Consistent with the Principal Contractor's WHS Management Plan
 - Clear and easily understood by all. Pay particular attention to any of your workers who may have language or reading and writing problems, and make sure they have fully understood all the requirements in the SWMS.
4. Ensure all workers performing the task are trained in the SWMS, have access to a copy while the work is being undertaken and sign the training record on the last page of the document.
5. Don't include different options for controlling risks under each activity step. This can be confusing for those doing the work - they need to know exactly what to do.
6. Leave some blank rows at the bottom of the SWMS in case some additional points need to be added on site.
7. Give a copy of the SWMS to the builder (or Principal Contractor) before starting work or when the SWMS changes

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING A SWMS

1. Before starting work, get your workers together and think about the work that needs to be done on the job site from start to finish. Identify each of the activity steps in consultation with your workers and supervisor, and list them sequentially in the first column of the table or template. If the scope of works involves many tasks, you may need to prepare separate SWMS's for each task.
2. Identify all possible risks and hazards against each activity step and write these in the second column. These may include falling from heights, contact with electricity, hit by falling materials, struck or run over by mobile plant, trench collapse, etc. If you're unsure, refer to the list of high risk construction activities to get you started. Remember, if you're doing any of these high risk construction activities, you must make sure they are covered in a SWMS as this is a legal requirement.
3. Once the risks and hazards are identified, determine whether the level of risk is high, medium or low (or Class 1, 2 or 3) by using the risk tables. This information should be entered in the third column. Particular attention should be paid to any risks you classify as 'high'. This part of the process is known as 'risk assessment'.
4. Decide on how you will control the risks. Here you should refer to the hierarchy of controls diagram. For example, if the risk is falling from heights, you should consider erecting scaffold or installing edge protection because these are 'higher order' controls than using a harness, which is a form of personal protective equipment (PPE). If you do decide to use PPE, you must also provide instruction to your workers on how to use it. Information on controls should be listed in the fourth column.
5. After deciding on what controls should be used, you then need to refer back to the risk tables and determine what level of risk is remaining after the controls are in place (the residual risk). Enter this rating in the fifth column. Here, the residual risk rating should be lower than the original risk rating assigned before the controls were implemented, otherwise the control selected may not be adequate.
6. Next, nominate a person in the work crew responsible for ensuring each of the controls is in place before work starts. Where necessary, you can nominate different people for ensuring different controls are in place. Enter the name/s in the sixth column. The person/s nominated should also make sure that all workers are following the agreed procedures in the SWMS.
7. At the end of the first shift on site, review the SWMS with your work crew and make any amendments where necessary.
8. Review the SWMS at set intervals (e.g. once per month) and particularly after there are any major changes at the job site. This is one of the most important steps because you will become aware of more risks as work on the job progresses. Remember to communicate any changes to your entire work crew.
9. You can then use the completed SWMS as a starting point for use on your other job sites but make sure you make any relevant changes to suit any different conditions on the other sites.

THE HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS

When deciding on what control you will use for each risk, you should always look at the highest order or most preferred options to start with. You should only consider a lower order control when it is not practical to use the others. It is particularly important to use the higher order controls for any risk you classify as high.

Hierarchy of controls		
	Control type	Example
Highest order (most preferred)	Elimination	Remove all asbestos-cement sheeting from the building prior to work starting
	Substitution	Substituting enamel paints for acrylic paints (less hazardous)
	Isolation	Locking off a circuit breaker on a switchboard to stop the power from being turned on
	Engineering	Fitting seat belts to rollover cages on mobile plant to prevent rollover injuries or death
	Administrative	Erecting safety signs adjacent to site entrance or in hazardous locations
Lowest order (least preferred)	PPE	Wearing hard hats, safety boots, ear muffs, goggles, harnesses etc.

Safe Work Method Statement

(SWMS) (01/2018.1)

Safe Work Method Statement for	
	(insert activity type i.e. roof framing, building a house etc)
Site address	1

SUBCONTRACTOR			
Name			
Address			
ABN		QBCC licence number	
Phone 1		Phone 2	
Email address		Facsimile number	

SWMS prepared by			
SWMS to be reviewed	☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ As required		
Next SWMS revision due on			
The person responsible for monitoring and reviewing this SWMS			

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR			
Name	Braxvale Constructions Pty Ltd		
Trading as			
ABN	58 623 467 130	QBCC licence number	15078547
Phone 1		Phone 2	
Email address		Facsimile number	

SWMS is consistent with PC's WHS Management Plan and other relevant subcontractor's SWMS's	☐ Yes ☐ No
Date SWMS given to PC	
SWMS accepted by (PC's rep)	

OTHER PERSONNEL

Other personnel involved in preparing SWMS (list all names)

	Name
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
11.	
12.	

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Relevant legislation and documents	
Qualifications required	
Equipment required	
Materials required	

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

This SWMS covers the following high risk activities

- ☐ Work where there is a risk of a person falling more than two metres
- ☐ Work on a telecommunication tower
- ☐ Demolition of an element of a structure that is load-bearing or otherwise related to the physical integrity of the structure
- ☐ Disturbance of asbestos
- ☐ Structural alterations or repairs that require temporary support to prevent collapse
- ☐ Work in or near a confined space
- ☐ Work in or near a shaft or trench with an excavated depth greater than 1.5 metres
- ☐ Work in or near a tunnel
- ☐ Using explosives
- ☐ Work on or near pressurised gas distribution mains or piping
- ☐ Work on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
- ☐ Work on or near energised electrical installations or services
- ☐ Work in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
- ☐ Tilt-up or precast concrete construction
- ☐ Work in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor that is in use by traffic other than pedestrians
- ☐ Work in an area at a workplace in which there is any movement of powered mobile plant
- ☐ Work in an area in which there are artificial extremes of temperature
- ☐ Work in or near water or other liquid that involves risk of drowning
- ☐ Diving work

RISKS, HAZARDS AND CONTROLS

	Activity steps	Potential risks and hazards	Risk rating	Control measures	Residual risk rating	Responsibility
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						

Other precautions and comments

TRAINING RECORD (to be completed by all personnel involved in this activity)

We, the undersigned, acknowledge that we have attended the toolbox meeting on the requirements of this SWMS and fully understand all safety precautions included in this document. We also understand that we are to follow this SWMS at all times and agree to participate in a review and revision of this SWMS when required.

	Name	Date	Signed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			
11.			
12.			

© Copyright Queensland Master Builders Association. All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, stored in a retrieval system, distributed or transmitted in any form, or by any means, including photocopying, scanning or other mechanical or electronic methods without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.