

MANAGING HEALTH & SAFETY IN CONSTRUCTION WORKPLACES

LEARNING OUTCOME

The aim of this session is to develop students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to managing safety in a construction workplace. During the session students will examine the definition of construction work and identify specific construction work hazards called up in the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Describe the statutory and minimum requirements relating to construction workplaces;
- List the hazards that are associated with construction workplaces;

REFERENCES

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011;
 - Part 16 - Transitional Provisions
 - Schedule 1 – Application of Act
 - Schedule 5 - Dictionary
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 – Chapter 6 Construction Work;
- National Standard for Construction Work [NOHSC: 1016 (2005)].

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DEFINITION OF CONSTRUCTION WORK

Section 289 of the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (WHS Regulations) defines *Construction work* as meaning any work carried out in connection with the construction, alteration, conversion, fitting-out, commissioning, renovation, repair, maintenance, refurbishment, demolition, decommissioning or dismantling of a structure.

WHO IS THE PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR FOR CONSTRUCTION? (WHS REGS 2011 S293)

1. The **principal contractor** for construction work is the person appointed by the person that commissions the construction project, as the principal contractor for the construction work.
2. If the owner does not appoint a principal contractor for the construction work, the owner is taken to be the principal contractor for the construction work.

The principal contractor as a PCBU has a number of obligations under section 20 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011. The Principal Contractor and persons in control of the construction site must make themselves familiar with these obligations.

PERSON IN CONTROL OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORK

The person with control of a construction project must ensure that the identification of hazards arising from:

- the construction site;
- any design relating to the construction project;
- working at height;
- hazardous substances, including the handling, use, storage, and on-site transport or disposal of hazardous substances;
- the presence of asbestos;
- systems of work;
- plant, including the on-site transport, installation, erection, commissioning, use, repair, maintenance, dismantling, storage or disposal of plant;
- manual handling (including the potential for occupational overuse injuries);
- the layout and condition of the construction site; and
- the physical working environment, is undertaken.

WHAT LAW APPLIES

In order to understand the workplace health and safety requirements for construction work, and your obligations under the law you must consider and understand relevant legislation and codes of practice.

General health and safety obligations

To understand your obligations and safety requirements you must be familiar with the:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 which imposes obligations on certain persons at workplaces to ensure workplace health and safety. The Work Health and Safety Act 2011 also guides you to meet your workplace health and safety duties through the:
 - Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 which describes what must be done to prevent or control certain hazards which cause injury, illness or death;
 - Codes of practice which are designed to give practical advice about ways to manage exposure to risks common to industry.

Workers' Compensation

Every Queensland employer must have workers' compensation insurance. Most employers insure with WorkCover Queensland, while a small number of large organisations have their own insurance. This insurance coverage ensures that employees injured at work receive financial support. The governing legislation in Queensland is the Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 2003 and Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Regulation 2011.

What You Must Do

If the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 describe how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace, you must do what the regulation says. If there is a code of practice that describes how to prevent or minimise a risk at your workplace you must manage hazards and risks in a way that is different to the code but provides a standard of health and safety that is equivalent to or higher than the standard required under the code.

If there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk at your workplace you must choose an appropriate way to manage exposure to the risk. People must, where there is no regulation or code of practice about a risk, take reasonable precautions and exercise proper diligence against the risk.

SPECIFIC REGULATIONS FOR CONSTRUCTION

Chapter 6 including the remaining parts of the Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 specifies particular requirements for construction work.

The regulations cover:

- principal contractor WHS Management Plans;
- safe work method statements for high-risk construction activities including demolition work and asbestos removal;
- general construction induction;
- housekeeping practices;
- safety of plant provided for common use;
- excavations (including trenches);
- falls (including work on roofs, from ladders and trestle ladder platforms, and work to erect or dismantle scaffolding);
- protecting people from falling objects;
- workplace amenities.

HEALTH HAZARDS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

As well as safety hazards that result in injuries, workers in the construction industry are exposed to health hazards that can cause injury or disease. The following health hazards are present at many construction sites:

- Solar radiation from outdoor work.
- Airborne contaminants including dust, fumes, vapours and gases from cutting, grinding, sanding, welding, engine exhausts, hazardous chemicals, spray painting and abrasive blasting.
- Noise from operating plant, equipment and tools.
- Hazardous chemicals such as cement cleaning agents, degreasers and detergents, paint and solvents.

- Heat from outdoor work, high physical workloads, operating plant and equipment, and personal protective equipment and clothing.
- Vibration to the whole body or hand and arms from plant and equipment such as grinders, drills, air tools, excavating machinery.

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