

OPERATIONAL RISK CONTROL SYSTEM

Working at Heights

Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) for high-risk construction work - critical controls, field verification and hold points. Prepared, kept on site and followed by all workers; tailor to your site and authorise before commencing.

Document No.	SWMS-WAH-001	Revision	A
Version	1.0	Issue date	
Review date		Category	Operational Risk Control System
Risk class	High-Risk Construction Work	Status	CONTROLLED
Jurisdiction	National (model WHS laws)	WHS regulator	Safe Work Australia (model WHS laws)

CONTROLLED DOCUMENT - Uncontrolled when printed. This document must be tailored to your project and approved by a competent person before use.



Scan to verify - SWMS-WAH-001 | Rev A | Version 1.0 | CONTROLLED

OBRAS OPERATING STATUS - GREEN / AMBER / RED

GREEN - PROCEED	AMBER - REVIEW	RED - DO NOT PROCEED
Current approved revision. All controls in place, competencies verified and sign-offs complete. Work may proceed.	Pending approval, near expiry, or a control needs checking. Verify and clear it before work starts.	Expired, superseded, unsigned, or a critical control has failed. Stop - do not proceed until cleared.

This document is GREEN only when it is the current revision AND every control, competency and sign-off is complete. Scan the QR to verify its live status at the point of work.

SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT (SWMS)

Working at Heights

SWMS No.	SWMS-WAH-001	Version	1.0	Date issued	dd/mm/yyyy
Company / PCBU	your company	Prepared by	name	Next review	dd/mm/yyyy
Project / Site	site address	Principal contractor	name	Approved by	name / position

FEEDS	RECEIVES FROM	SUPPORTS
SWMS Register; SWMS Approval Register	Site induction; VOC competency	Daily Readiness Dashboard (go / no-go)

HIGH-RISK CONSTRUCTION WORK (HRCW)

This SWMS covers High-Risk Construction Work under the WHS Regulation - specifically work where there is a risk of a person falling more than 2 metres - including work on roofs, scaffolds, elevating work platforms (EWPs), ladders, formwork and near unprotected edges, penetrations and fragile surfaces. A SWMS must be prepared before this work starts, kept on site, and followed by all workers.

SCOPE OF WORK

Item	Details - complete for your site
Describe the work this SWMS covers (what, where and how)	
Work area / location on site (level, area, grid)	
Start date and expected duration	
Other High-Risk Construction Work involved (if any)	

LEGISLATION, CODES & STANDARDS

This SWMS aligns with the work health and safety laws of the relevant Australian jurisdiction. Apply the Act and Regulations for your state or territory:

Jurisdiction	Principal WHS / OHS Act & Regulations
Commonwealth, NSW, QLD & ACT	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 & WHS Regulations 2011
Northern Territory	WHS (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 & WHS (NUL) Regulations
South Australia & Tasmania	Work Health and Safety Act 2012 & WHS Regulations 2012
Victoria	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 & OHS Regulations 2017
Western Australia	Work Health and Safety Act 2020 & WHS (General) Regulations 2022

Codes of Practice (Safe Work Australia):

- Construction Work
- How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks

- Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces
- Managing the Risk of Plant in the Workplace
- Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work
- Hazardous Manual Tasks
- Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace
- WHS Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination

Australian Standards:

- Code of Practice: Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- AS/NZS 1891 - Industrial fall-arrest systems and devices
- AS/NZS 1576 - Scaffolding
- AS/NZS 1892 - Portable ladders
- AS 2550.10 / AS 2550.1 - Cranes, hoists and winches (elevating work platforms)

COMPETENCY, TRAINING & PLANT

- All workers hold a current Construction Induction Card (White Card)
- Workers are trained and competent in working at heights; training records held on site
- EWP operators hold the relevant High Risk Work Licence (WP for boom > 11 m) and/or a Yellow Card / VOC for the specific unit
- Scaffold above 4 m is erected, altered and dismantled only by a licensed scaffolder
- Anyone using a fall-arrest harness is trained in its fitting, inspection and the rescue plan
- A trained rescuer and rescue equipment are on site and available before work starts

Plant & equipment used: _____ EWP (scissor / boom lift), mobile and fixed scaffold, ladders, fall-arrest harness and energy-absorbing lanyards, certified anchor points, guardrails and edge protection, safety mesh, tool lanyards

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) - MANDATORY ON SITE**Hard hat****Hi-vis****Safety boots****Safety glasses****Gloves****Fall-arrest harness**

HIERARCHY OF CONTROL (always apply controls from the top down)

Rank	Control level	How it works	Examples
1	Elimination	Remove the hazard completely - the most effective control	Do the task at ground level; design the hazard out
2	Substitution	Replace it with something less hazardous	Use a less hazardous material, method or item of plant
3	Isolation	Separate people from the hazard	Exclusion zones, barricades, guarding, isolation / lock-out
4	Engineering	Use engineering controls	Guards, RCDs, mechanical lifting aids, ventilation, edge protection
5	Administrative	Change the way people work	SWMS, procedures, training, permits, signage, supervision
6	PPE	Protect the worker - the last line of defence	Hard hat, hi-vis, boots, gloves, eye & hearing protection, RPE, fall arrest

JOB STEP RISK ASSESSMENT

#	Job step / activity	Hazards / what could go wrong	Initial	Control measures (hierarchy of control)	Residual	Responsible
1	Plan the task and confirm the method	Wrong access method chosen; fall hazards not identified; workers not briefed	High	ELIMINATE first - do the work from the ground or off a solid structure where possible (prefabricate, use extension tools). Where work at height is unavoidable, select the highest-order access method (EWP or scaffold before ladders). Confirm the SWMS on site and brief all workers before work starts.	Low	name
2	Assess the work area and establish exclusion zones	Fall through penetrations / fragile roof; objects falling on people below; public or other trades entering the drop zone	High	Identify and cover or guard all penetrations, voids and skylights. Mark fragile surfaces and never walk on them. Set a hard-barricaded exclusion zone below the work with signage; control access so no one is under the work.	Low	name
3	Set up edge protection / guardrails	Fall from an unprotected edge	Extreme	Install compliant guardrails, mid-rails and toe-boards to all open edges as the primary (passive) fall-prevention control. Inspect for completeness and security before use. Do not remove edge protection while work continues nearby.	Low	name

4	Set up and inspect the EWP / scaffold	Overturn, entrapment, structural failure, electrocution from overhead lines	High	Complete the pre-start / log book on the EWP; check ground bearing, slope and outriggers. Maintain safe approach distances from overhead powerlines (use a spotter). Confirm scaffold has a current green scaftag and full planks, guardrails and access before use.	Low	name
5	Fit and connect fall-arrest harness and anchor points	Fall arrest fails; worker not connected; anchor pulls out; suspension trauma	Extreme	Where a fall risk remains, use a fall-arrest system as the last line of defence. Inspect harness, lanyard and connectors before each use and tag out any defect. Connect only to a certified anchor rated for fall arrest. Keep the lanyard short to limit free-fall and ensure adequate clearance below.	Low	name
6	Access the elevated work position	Fall while climbing; ladder slips or is over-reached	High	Use ladders only for short-duration, light work; maintain three points of contact, 4:1 angle, and tie off / foot the ladder. Do not over-reach - reposition instead. Enter EWP baskets only when grounded and exit only at the work level.	Low	name
7	Carry out the work at height	Fall; dropped tools and materials strike people below; loss of balance	High	Stay within the guardrails / basket and remain connected. Use tool lanyards and closed containers; never throw materials. Keep the work area tidy. Do not lean out, climb on rails, or stand on mid-rails.	Low	name
8	Monitor weather and changing conditions	Wind, rain, heat or storm increases fall and electrocution risk; surfaces become slippery	High	Check the forecast and stop EWP / roof / scaffold work in high wind, lightning or wet conditions per the manufacturer and site limits. Re-assess after any change to the task, plant, site, weather or crew, and re-authorise before resuming.	Low	name
9	Respond to an emergency / rescue from height	Worker suspended in harness (suspension trauma); injury at height; delayed rescue	Extreme	Have a documented rescue plan and rescue equipment ready before work starts, with a trained rescuer on site. Aim to release a suspended worker within minutes. Call 000, make the area safe, and do not attempt a rescue that puts the rescuer at risk.	Low	name
10	Pack down and clear the work area	Falls during dismantling; leaving open edges, penetrations or trip hazards	Medium	Dismantle in the reverse order of setup; keep edge protection in place until last. Reinstate permanent guarding or covers over penetrations. Remove waste, coil leads and leave the area safe for the next crew.	Low	name

RISK MATRIX & RATING KEY (Risk = Likelihood x Consequence)

Likelihood \ Consequence	Insignificant (1)	Minor (2)	Moderate (3)	Major (4)	Catastrophic (5)
Almost certain (5)	5	10	15	20	25
Likely (4)	4	8	12	16	20
Possible (3)	3	6	9	12	15
Unlikely (2)	2	4	6	8	10
Rare (1)	1	2	3	4	5

LOW (1-3)

MEDIUM (4-6)

HIGH (8-12)

EXTREME (15-25)

EMERGENCY & RESPONSE

Site emergency no.	phone	First aider(s)	name(s)
Nearest hospital	name / address	Assembly point	location

CRITICAL CONTROLS, FIELD VERIFICATION & HOLD POINTS

These controls are mandatory and must be verified in the field before and during the work. Work must not pass a hold point until it is inspected and released by the responsible person.

#	Critical control (must be in place)	Verified Y/N	Verified by	Hold point - work stops until released
1				

2				
3				
4				
5				

Authorised to commence by	name / position	Signature / date	
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STOP WORK TRIGGERS (stop immediately, make the area safe, and re-authorise before resuming)

- A critical control is missing, fails, or is bypassed
- Site conditions change beyond this SWMS (weather, ground, services, access, adjacent work)
- An incident, injury, near miss or dangerous occurrence happens
- An unlicensed, untrained or unauthorised person enters the work zone
- Plant or equipment shows a defect, alarm or fault, or is outside its inspection date
- Any worker is unsure it is safe to continue - anyone on site can call a stop

ONGOING MONITORING & VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Controls must be monitored throughout the work - not just at the start. Record what is checked, how, how often and by whom.

What is monitored	Method	Frequency	Responsible

WORKER SIGN-ON (I have read, understood and agree to follow this SWMS)

#	Name	Company	Signature	Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

SUPERVISOR VERIFICATION & SIGN-OFF

SWMS reviewed on site by (supervisor)	<i>name / signature</i>	Date	<i>dd/mm/yyyy</i>
Controls confirmed in place	☐ Yes ☐ No	HRW licences / VOCs verified	☐ Yes ☐ N/A
Workers consulted & signed on	☐ Yes	Safe to proceed	☐ Yes ☐ No

SWMS REVIEW

Review this SWMS if the work, plant, site conditions or workers change, after any incident or near miss, or at the scheduled review date.

Review date	Reviewed by	Reason / changes made	Signature

REVISION REGISTER

Rev	Date	Description of change	Approved by
A		Initial controlled release	[CLIENT COMPANY NAME]

IMPORTANT - READ BEFORE USE

This document is provided by OBRAS ONSITE as a starting-point template only. You are responsible for ensuring it is appropriate for your specific workplace, tasks, plant and site conditions. It must be reviewed, edited to suit the actual site, and signed off by a competent person before use. This template does not constitute professional WHS advice and OBRAS ONSITE accepts no liability arising from its use. We strongly recommend your completed document is reviewed by a qualified WHS professional or competent person. (c) 2026 OBRAS ONSITE. All Rights Reserved. OBRAS ONSITE, the OBRAS ONSITE Operating System, OBRAS ONSITE QR Gateway and associated methodologies, control systems and documentation structures are proprietary OBRAS ONSITE intellectual property; unauthorised reproduction, resale, distribution or commercial use is prohibited.