

# Serious about farm safety

A guide to developing a health and safety management system for small to medium sized agricultural businesses



[www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

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# Introduction

*Serious about farm safety* will assist small to medium sized agricultural businesses to develop a system to manage health and safety risks around the farm and other agricultural workplaces. A simple health and safety system will reduce the risk of workplace injuries and can help to reduce your workers' compensation premium.

All business owners and employers are required to provide a safe workplace for workers and visitors. This guide will help you cut through the complexities of work health and safety regulation and compliance.

Workplace health and safety policies and procedures should form the framework of a health and safety system. This guide provides useful information and a series of simple templates (T1-T11) to help you set up your own safety system.

When reading the guide, reference should be made to the following legislation and codes of practice available at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au)

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act)
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (WHS Regulation)
- *Electrical Safety Act 2002* (ES Act)
- *Electrical Safety Regulation 2013* (ES Regulation).



# Essential definitions

**Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU)** – is a business or an undertaking that is either done alone or with others, whether or not for profit or gain. A PCBU can be a sole trader (e.g. a self-employed person), a partnership, company, unincorporated association or government department or public authority (including municipal council).

**Worker** – includes employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and PCBUs, who are individuals if they perform work for the business.

**Officer** – is a person who makes, or participates in making decisions that affect the whole or substantial part of the organisation's activities.

**Person with management or control** – a PCBU with management or control over the workplace.

**Plant** – machinery, equipment, appliance, container, implement or tool.

**Structure** – anything that is constructed, whether fixed or moveable, temporary or permanent and includes buildings, masts, towers, framework, pipelines, transport infrastructure and underground works (shafts and tunnels).

**Substance** – any natural or artificial substance in the form of a solid, liquid, gas or vapour.

**Supply** – supply and re-supply of a thing provided by way of sale, exchange, lease, hire or hire purchase arrangement.

**Volunteer** – a person who acts on a voluntary basis, regardless of whether they receive out of pocket expenses.

**Health and safety representative (HSR)** – a worker who has been elected by a work group to represent them on health and safety issues — mostly relevant to PCBUs with a larger number of employees.

**Work group** – a group of workers who share similar work conditions (e.g. workers in a packing shed).

**Workplace** – any place where work is carried out for a business or undertaking. This may include offices, factories, shops, construction sites, farms, packing sheds, vehicles, ships aircraft or other mobile structures on land or water such as offshore units and platforms.

# Legislation

## What duties apply?

All workers in Australia are protected by work health and safety laws. This includes employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and employers who perform work. The WHS Act also provides protection for the general public so that their health and safety is not placed at risk by work activities.

### ***Work Health and Safety Act 2011***

#### **Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011**

The WHS Act provides a nationally consistent framework to protect the health, safety and welfare of all workers at work and of all other people who might be affected by the work.

Anyone with duties under the WHS Act should refer to the WHS Regulation and applicable codes of practice.

The WHS Regulation outlines how a duty under the WHS Act must be performed and prescribes procedural or administrative matters to support the WHS Act (e.g. licences for specific activities or record keeping).

### ***Electrical Safety Act 2002***

#### **Electrical Safety Regulation 2013**

The ES Act is the legislative framework for electrical safety in Queensland and is designed to prevent people from being killed or injured and property from being destroyed or damaged by electricity.

The E S Regulation 2013 identifies specific ways to meet electrical safety duties under the ES Act.

## Codes of practice

Codes of practice provide practical guidance to assist duty holders to meet the requirements of the WHS Act and the ES Act, and provide effective ways to identify and manage risks.

Compliance with the Acts and the Regulations may be achieved by following a method that is not set out in the code of practice. Codes of practice are not mandatory and a duty holder may choose to use some other way to achieve compliance, however, any other method must provide an equivalent or higher standard of work health and safety than suggested by the code of practice.

# General responsibilities

A PCBU must manage health and safety risks to workers, customers, visitors and onlookers to the work activity. These risks can be managed through safe environments for workers, safe systems of work, safe plant and machinery, safe storage of hazardous chemicals, providing adequate facilities for workers, access to information, induction, training or supervision and monitoring the health of workers and conditions at the workplace.

Although there are similarities in work practices and hazards, every agricultural business is likely to be different in some way and will need to develop its own safety solutions.

## Duties

The WHS Act outlines general health and safety duties of employers and workers. In addition, people with control of a workplace or designers, manufacturers, importers, suppliers and installers of plant or structures will have duties to follow.

A person may have more than one duty. For example, the working director of a company has duties as an officer of the company and also as a worker. More than one person may have the same duty. For example, a property owner and a contractor share the duty of ensuring the health and safety of workers while on the property.

Officers of a PCBU must also exercise due diligence to ensure the PCBU complies with its health and safety duties and obligations and show they have taken reasonable steps to manage health and safety. There are detailed definitions around due diligence at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

## Duty to consult

Employers have a duty to consult with their workers and health and safety representatives (HSRs) about matters that directly affect them in the workplace. This extends to consulting with contractors, workers from a labour hire company, students working on the property, apprentices, trainees and volunteer workers.

If there is more than one duty holder in the workplace, (e.g. a farm owner and contractor) they have a duty to consult with each other, cooperate to meet health and safety obligations and share information.



# Reasonably practicable

The guiding principle of the WHS Act is that all people are given the highest level of health and safety protection from hazards arising from work, so far as is *reasonably practicable*.

The term means what could be reasonably done at a particular time to ensure ongoing health and safety, taking into account:

- the likelihood of the relevant hazard or risk occurring
- the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or risk
- what the person knows, or ought reasonably to know, about the hazard or risk and the ways of eliminating or minimising the risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk.

# Workers

Workers also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not adversely affect the health and safety of other people. Workers must comply with any reasonable instruction and cooperate with any reasonable health and safety policy or procedure (e.g. workers must follow procedures for operating machinery or instructions to wear personal protective equipment).

# Safety management systems

Work health and safety does not have to be complicated. Safety management systems can be customised depending on the size, needs and activities of the agricultural business. The following elements are essential for a safety management system.

## Management commitment

The primary responsibility for a safe workplace rests with the employer. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure everyone is clear about their health and safety responsibilities and to build the safety culture. That means being prepared to implement safe work practices and systems, providing sufficient time and safe and effective tools to achieve the desired work outcomes, and engaging with workers and encouraging them to report incidents or identify health and safety solutions.

A manager who leads by example and promotes health and safety as a high priority sends a message that your business is serious about safety. An easy starting point to demonstrate this commitment to safety is to develop a workplace health and safety (WHS) policy. A WHS policy forms the framework for all your business and work operations. A policy describes the expected standards, priorities and timeframes for health and safety for workers and employers. It should also contain information about consulting with workers or their elected representatives.

The policy should be signed off by the business owner and a worker representative and have a date of review to keep it relevant for your workplace. All workers should be made aware of the WHS policy, have access to it and ensure that it is understood.

### Refer to T1 — Sample health and safety policy

#### Management commitment

- Determine safety responsibilities and clearly communicate them
- Commit time and resources
- Make safety a priority
- Demonstrate commitment to safety at the highest level in the organisation
- Maintain the commitment to safety and build the safety culture

## Consultation, cooperation and coordination

The decisions you make will have health and safety consequences for everyone at the workplace. The WHS Act requires employers to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other people who have a work health and safety duty in relation to the same matter.

This includes cooperation between the people who manage or control the work and those who carry out the work or who are affected by the work. A safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone communicates with each other to identify hazards and risks, talks about health and safety concerns and then works together to find solutions.

By consulting with your workers, you can share WHS information with them and take their views into account before making any decisions. Including workers in the decision-making process shows clear management commitment to safety, and by consulting with them you can be alerted to any WHS issues experienced by them and they can be involved in finding solutions to those issues. Your workers are often best placed to identify hazards and risks by seeing issues that you may have overlooked, and to assist in identifying suitable solutions that will make their work easier and safer.

Consultation can be conducted through formal talks or via a less formal discussion, such as during breaks. The chosen format will depend on the type and size of your business. You should keep records or diary notes of what was discussed and any action items.

Regular consultation is better than consulting only when required or as issues arise; this allows you to proactively identify and fix potential problems early before they may escalate into an incident.

### Refer to T2 — Record of staff toolbox meeting



**Health and safety representatives (HSRs)** are elected by a work group to represent their fellow workers' health and safety interests. Whether the work group has a HSR will depend on the size of your workforce and whether the workers make a request to elect one. There are a number of requirements to be met during election procedures (refer to [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) for more information about HSRs).

## Health and safety committee

A health and safety committee facilitates cooperation between a PCBU and workers in developing and carrying out measures to ensure health and safety at work.

For more information check the *Work health and safety consultation, co-operation and co-ordination code of practice 2011* and the *How to manage work health and safety risks code of practice 2011* or visit [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

### Consultation, cooperation and coordination

- Implement consultation arrangements suitable for your workplace
- Record decisions that affect safety
- Encourage your workers to become involved
- Send a clear message about the importance of safety
- Review safety solutions for effectiveness

## Risk management

The most important aspect of workplace health and safety is managing risk, by identifying and controlling hazards that could be harmful to you or your workers.

Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks arising from their business or undertaking. The easiest way to manage risk is to consider the three elements: workers, processes and methods of work they will be performing and the environment in which it will be done.

This process is known as risk management and involves the four steps set out in *How to manage work health and safety risks code of practice 2011*:

- Identify hazards – find out what could cause harm.
- Assess risks – understand the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazard, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening.
- Control risks – implement the most effective control measure that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
- Review control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

## Identifying the hazards

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause injury, illness or damage to health.

To identify hazards in your workplace:

- inspect the workplace for potentially hazardous equipment, plant, machinery and activities
- monitor the work performed by each staff member and note any hazards while doing these tasks
- talk to your staff and other producers/growers and ask what causes problems, incidents, injuries or near misses
- review manufacturer's instructions on using equipment, machinery and products
- review any regulatory requirements and codes of practice
- compare your business's injury and incident records with the wider industry sector.

## Consult with your workers when deciding how to control the risks

By drawing on the knowledge and experience of your workers, you can make better decisions about how the work should be carried out safely. Your workers' experience in completing tasks will help identify appropriate control measures and by involving them in the discussion it will increase their acceptance of changes.

### Hazards of a fruit growing orchard may include:

- manual handling
- use of hand tools and/or power tools
- operating machinery, rural mobile plant, elevating work platforms (EWPs)
- operating a chainsaw
- hazardous chemicals
- picking fruit from ladders
- overhead power lines
- moving fruit bins
- noise
- sun exposure.



### **Hazards on a turf farm may include:**

- operating machinery
- overhead power lines
- handling hazardous chemicals
- sun exposure
- manual handling, such as lifting heavy objects or frequent/repetitive lifts
- flying particles
- dust.

### **Hazards in beef cattle production may include:**

- riding a horse
- riding a quad bike or motorbike
- animal handling
- mustering
- working in stock yards
- handling chemicals
- sun exposure.

## **Assessing risks**

During the assessment process you should identify:

- how each hazard may cause harm
- the effectiveness of existing control measures and whether they control all types of harm
- how work is being done versus how it is meant to be done (rather than relying on written manuals and procedures which may not be followed).

Include non-production tasks such as maintenance and cleaning, equipment breakdowns and failures to ensure adequate health and safety controls are in place.

The likelihood that someone will be harmed can be estimated by considering the following:

- How often and how long are people exposed to the hazard?
- How effective are the current controls in reducing risk?
- Are hazards more likely to cause harm because of the working environment?
- Could the way people act and behave affect the likelihood of a hazard causing harm?
- Do the differences between individuals in the workplace make it more likely for harm to occur?

You can rate the likelihood as one of the following:

- Certain to occur – expected to occur in most circumstances
- Very likely – will probably occur in most circumstances
- Possible – might occur occasionally
- Unlikely – could happen at some time
- Rare – may happen only in exceptional circumstances.

The level of risk will increase as the likelihood of harm and its severity increases. It is mandatory to complete risk assessment forms for all the identified hazards, such as confined spaces and hazardous chemicals, and keep a copy for future reference.

## **Controlling risks**

Once all the hazards are listed and the level of risk assessed, you need to decide how each hazard will be controlled. The items with the highest level of risk need to be addressed first.

The ways of controlling risks are ranked from the highest level of protection to the lowest in the hierarchy of risk control. If the hazard cannot be eliminated, you must minimise the risk by putting control measures in place. There may be more than one control method and there may be a combination of controls. You may need to use the best solution at the time while developing a more effective control, which may take more time and resources.

Things to consider when deciding on control measures include the:

- physical environment (e.g. the terrain, heat, cold, wet surfaces, and overhead power lines)
- nature of the work, the process and working conditions
- required qualifications, training and knowledge of the task
- nature and severity of any potential injury or disease.

Controls should be implemented according to the hierarchy of risk control.

## Hierarchy of risk control

### Level 1

Eliminate the hazard

### Level 2

Substitute the hazard with something safer

Isolate the hazard from people

Reduce the risks through engineering controls

### Level 3

Reduce exposure to the hazard using administrative actions (safe work procedures)

Use personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE is the lowest level of control and other controls should be considered first. PPE is often used in conjunction with other control measures.

**Refer to T3 — Risk assessment form**

**Refer to T4 — Risk register template**

## Reviewing the controls

Monitor and review your control measures to check if:

- they have been implemented as planned
- the risk is being controlled
- the controls have not introduced any new problems.

## Safe work procedures

Safe work procedures (SWPs) are established to help your workers consistently and safely manage specific work tasks to avoid injury or illness while doing them. They are an administrative control that outlines the risks associated with a specific work task and the sequence of steps to do the task safely. To be effective, SWPs should be developed in consultation with your workers and be reviewed should you have an incident or changes occur in the workplace.

SWPs are also known as:

- job safety analysis (JSA)
- safe systems of work (SSOW)



- safe operating procedure (SOP)
- job hazard analysis (JHA)
- system hazard analysis (SHA).

## **Developing a safe work procedure**

### **1. Choose a hazardous task and analyse it**

You may need to refer to information sources such as equipment manuals, your employees, safety data sheets or industry guides.

Next, break the hazardous task into steps and for each step clearly outline what could hurt someone or make them sick. Discuss the best and most practical controls to manage the risks.

### **2. Choose the controls you are going to use**

Follow this process:

- Select the control measures that are appropriate and cross out any that are inappropriate (but leave them on your task analysis for future reference).
- Some controls may require you to make physical changes to your workplace, such as buying new equipment, replacing dangerous equipment or fitting a guard.
- General control measures, such as sweeping the floor once a week, may not be related to a production task. These general items are best placed into your general workplace rules or induction and training rather than into every SWP.
- The remaining control measures will describe how to do the task safely.

### **3. Apply the results of your task analysis to write your safe work procedure**

Combine the task's steps with the most appropriate controls to develop the SWP. Add pictures, and as many steps as are needed to clearly describe the process. The final SWP should be signed and dated by a manager and be readily accessible for workers.

The next hazardous task should use the same process.

**Refer to T5 — Task analysis template**

## Sample safe work procedure

Job name		Station bore run
		The bore run covers eight bores with diesel pumps, and three windmills. The run is along a 360 km route in isolated areas of the property and includes black spots for radio reception. Most times it is a single person run. You are required to fill all fuels, check all tank levels, check all troughs for float valve operation, leaks, and cleanliness, and check operation and flows on all wind mills.
Describe the main hazards of the job		Actions to be taken
1	Travelling in isolated areas or working on your own	Take an appropriate communication device and know how to use it. Have someone accompany you on your first trip. Take sufficient food and water with you.
2	Mechanical breakdown	Check the vehicle's mechanics, including the oil, water, tyres, lights and battery before you leave. Take spare tyres, a tool box and ensure you know some basic mechanics. Stay with the car if it breaks down.
3	Travelling on rough roads	Drive according to conditions. Use 4WD where appropriate. Don't cross flooded creeks.
4	Decompression levers	Always use the decompression levers for diesel engines in the event of a break-down. Know how to use them.
5	Working at heights	Do not work at heights, such as windmill platforms, unless you use a harness. Before climbing the tower, make sure your boots are clean, use gloves for better grip and ensure loose clothing is tucked in.
6	Heat stress	Avoid heat stress and always drink plenty of water, wear a hat, and wear long sleeve shirts and long pants.
7	First aid	Check the first aid kit prior to departure, ensure items for snake bites, bone splints and burns are included. Make sure you have basic first aid knowledge.
8	Protective clothing	Always wear a wide brim hat, strong ankle-supporting boots, long pants, long sleeve shirt, gloves and climbing harness.

## Sample SWP for tractor use

DO NOT use this machine unless you have been instructed in its safe use and operation.



**FOOT  
PROTECTION  
MUST BE WORN**



**EYE & HEARING  
PROTECTION  
MUST BE WORN**



**SUNSCREEN  
MUST BE WORN**



**PROTECTIVE  
CLOTHING  
MUST BE WORN**

### Pre-operational checks:

1. Ensure that the seatbelt, roll over protective structure (ROPS), falling objects protective structure (FOPS) (where fitted) and power take-off (PTO) guard are in sound condition.
2. Faulty equipment must not be used. Report suspect machinery immediately.
3. Check the three-point linkage, pneumatic and hydraulic systems are functioning.
4. Use only implements that meet the specifications listed in the vehicle operation manual.
5. Ensure tractor driver is trained, competent and licensed, if driving on public roads.
6. Ensure that all lights and warning devices are operational and the vehicle is registered, if driving on public roads.
7. *Add others as appropriate.*

***Do not allow any person other than the driver to ride on the tractor.***

### Operational safety checks

1. Never start or operate levers from anywhere other than the driver's seat.
2. Before starting the tractor, ensure all levers are in their neutral positions, the parking brake is engaged and the clutch and PTO are disengaged.
3. Do not operate or idle engine in a non-ventilated area.
4. Only pull using the drawbar or hitch.
5. Drive at a speed to ensure control over unexpected hazards.
6. Do not operate near ditches, holes or embankments, which may collapse under the tractor's weight.

7. Always reverse when going up a steep slope. Avoid slopes that are too steep for safe operation.
8. Do not dismount from a tractor while the engine is running.
9. Ensure that no person or animal is endangered when operating the equipment.
10. Ensure bucket (if fitted) is raised above line of sight.
11. When stopping the tractor:
  - park on even ground, disengage the PTO and lower all implements
  - place all control levers in their neutral positions, apply the parking brake, turn off the engine and remove the keys
  - ensure the tractor has come to a complete stop before dismounting.
12. *Add others as appropriate.*

## Housekeeping

- Clean away any foreign material, debris from in and around engine and implement parts.
- Keep the work area or implement shed in a clean and tidy condition.

## Potential hazards

- ◆ Entanglement in PTO    ◆ Noise    ◆ Rollover

### Summary of safe work procedures

- Identify and prioritise tasks that require SWPs
- Develop SWPs
- Implement SWPs through training
- Review your procedures and work tasks
- Plan your approach to developing SWP
- Involve your workers
- Keep procedures up-to-date and regularly review SWPs

**Refer to T6 — Safe work procedure template**

# Induction, training and supervision

Employers must provide their workers with any information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety at work. Managers and supervisors should also be provided with the information, instruction and training they need to ensure the health and safety of the people under their supervision.

## Induction

Induction is the best way to make new workers (young and old) aware of how the business operates, important procedures and how to manage workplace risks. You should document the procedure for new workers or contractors, workers transferring to a new job or location and workers that are undertaking a hazardous task for the first time. Inductions are also relevant to refresh workers moving to a new location in the business, those operating a new piece of machinery or workers who may have been on extended leave. An induction should also be prepared for visitors entering the workplace.

An induction checklist will help to ensure all topics are covered with each worker or visitor. Ensure the induction form is signed and dated. Store your induction records for future reference.

An induction should:

- describe the worker's role (e.g. who to report to, tasks to be done, hours of work, and pay rates)
- the workplace layout, such as location of facilities and first aid equipment, and details of emergency plans, contact personnel and equipment
- detail the risks associated with the task or workplace
- provide details about their health and safety representative, arrangements for consulting with workers (e.g. toolbox talks) and the roles and responsibilities of key people involved in health and safety at the workplace
- outline workplace policies, general rules (e.g. housekeeping or keeping machine guards in place), specific rules (e.g. not using hazardous substances without first reading the safety data sheet) and reporting requirements (e.g. incidents, injuries and damaged equipment)
- include task-based training, including SWPs
- demonstrate the use of PPE and outline appropriate clothing to be worn
- cover workers' compensation insurance and the business's return to work program.

**Refer to T7 — Induction checklist**

## **Young workers**

Particular attention should be given to young workers with limited experience or background in a rural environment or the task to be undertaken. They may not be confident to ask questions, so it is important to make sure they understand the job they are doing, are adequately supervised and are made to feel comfortable to ask questions, report hazards and discuss any other issues.

Young workers and those with limited English may be less likely to question health and safety practices or speak up if they are unsure. They may find it easier to communicate through a health and safety representative, an interpreter or worker representative. Information should also be simplified and presented in different ways, such as using diagrams, photos, pictures and practical demonstrations to make it easier to understand.

## **Seasonal and labour hire workers**

The responsibility of employers towards seasonal workers is the same as any workers they employ. Seasonal workers need to be adequately inducted into the workplace, trained in their jobs and closely supervised.

Although they might work on a property for only a short time, they are at a higher risk of injury due to their limited understanding of the workplace and the risks associated with the tasks. They should be treated the same as new, inexperienced workers no matter what their age.

You must also ensure that workers from non-English speaking backgrounds understand the information and training they have been given. It may be necessary to provide an interpreter or have written instructions translated into different languages or a visual aid.

## **Using a labour hire company**

Under a labour hire arrangement, both the labour hire PCBU and the host PCBU have duties to ensure the health and safety of labour hire workers. These duties must be fulfilled to the extent to which each PCBU has the capacity to influence and control the matter.

If using a labour hire company, specify to them the tasks to be done, skills and experience needed and any special conditions, equipment to be used, licences required and appropriate clothing to be worn.

The PCBUs must consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other so far as is reasonably practicable. Duty holders under the WHS Act cannot contract out of their work health and safety obligations.

## Contractors

In the agricultural industry, contractors are often engaged to carry out tasks such as harvesting, mustering, spraying, fencing and pruning. You must also manage the risks to their health and safety as you would for any other worker. That includes a site-specific induction for contractors before the work begins and ensuring the work is completed safely according to agreed procedures.

Contractors will also need to be inducted to the same level as a new worker and a signed agreement should outline that they will not endanger any person by using unsafe work practices or equipment. All machinery and equipment that is brought on-site and is used, must be well maintained, with all guards in place.

Where there are shared responsibilities between the PCBU and the contractor who employs workers, they must consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other to provide a safe work environment, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The health and safety requirements of contractors are usually included in the contract documentation. They must be suitably qualified and hold the necessary licences to carry out the intended work (e.g. forklift high risk work licence or ChemCert).

## Training

Training will help ensure that your workers can effectively do the tasks they perform and manage any emergencies or issues that could affect their health and safety. It is not okay to simply give a worker a work procedure and request them to acknowledge they understand it and can do it. Workers should be able to demonstrate that they are competent in performing the tasks according to the set procedures.

Employers should:

- schedule specific training for workers
- keep records of training for each worker
- review and revise training provided to workers
- keep copies of licences, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications or competencies held by workers
- evaluate the effectiveness of training given to workers.

Training should:

- be designed for the worker's level of responsibility
- take into account the background skills and knowledge of each worker
- be provided in a language and form that is comprehended
- be conducted by a competent person (e.g. experienced employee/manager or an outside training provider).

You should keep each worker's training records for future reference.



## Supervision

Good supervisors are essential for improving productivity and maintaining safe practices. Supervision of workers will help ensure that your policies and procedures are being properly followed, and that any non-compliance is swiftly addressed and rectified. Supervisors also provide a direct communication link from the employer to the worker.

The level of supervision required will depend on the level of risk and the experience of the workers involved. High levels of supervision are necessary where inexperienced workers are expected to follow new procedures or to carry out difficult and critical tasks.

**Refer to T8 — Training record**

## Reporting safety

You don't need a complicated system in place for reporting hazards. A simple reporting procedure will help you identify WHS problems when they arise and address them.

Safety reporting procedures make it simpler for you and your workers to manage safety issues and stop re-occurrences of incidents and injuries. An analysis of trends may help identify safety issues that were previously unnoticed. It is important that your workers can confidently report hazards to you knowing that you will try to fix the issues they report. If not, your workers will become reluctant to report problems in the future.

## Incident notifications

The WHS Act sets out what sort of incidents are notifiable to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ). An incident is notifiable if it arises out of the conduct of a business or undertaking and results in the death, serious injury or serious illness of a person or involves a dangerous incident. Refer to [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) for more information about a serious injury or illness, or a dangerous incident.



A PCBU is required to make the notification immediately after becoming aware that a notifiable incident has occurred. The PCBU must keep a record of each notifiable incident for at least five years from the date notified to WHSQ.

Notification must be by the fastest possible means — usually by phone on 1300 362 128. The website [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) outlines options for completing the notification form and submitting to WHSQ.

A serious electrical incident or dangerous electrical event is also notifiable under the ES Act. For more information visit [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au) or contact the Electrical Safety Office on 1300 362 128.

## **Other notifications**

PCBUs are required to notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland of asbestos removal work, demolition, lead and hazardous chemicals.

## **Workers' compensation and return to work**

If you employ workers, you must have a current workers' compensation insurance policy, an injury reporting system and an effective return to work program. These will help to ensure that your workers receive the appropriate treatment and benefits, including assistance in returning to their normal duties after a workplace injury or illness.

### **Help your worker get back to work**

Getting back to work is an important step in recovering from a work-related injury. It means that a worker can return to a normal life, often reducing the financial and emotional impact on them and their family.

You can begin your worker's return to work plan right away by identifying suitable duties and equipment they can use, or by altering working hours. Gain approval from your worker's treating doctor prior to commencing the suitable duties plan.

**Refer to T9 — Suitable duties**

# General information for the agriculture industry

The six most common causes of injuries in the agricultural industry are:

- quad bikes
- tractors
- utes and farm vehicles
- unguarded machinery
- hazardous manual tasks
- animal handling.

There are practical solutions to control these risks at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

## Remote or isolated work

Remote or isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of location, time or the nature of the work.

Assistance includes rescue, medical assistance and the attendance of emergency service workers. Under legislation, a duty holder must minimise the risk to workers' health and safety, which includes effective communication with remote and isolated workers. For example, a single worker irrigating on a property could have a call in system through a two-way radio or phone. Remote workers may have access to an emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) or a GPS tracking system. Alternatively, they might use a 'buddy' system, but it needs to be reasonably practicable for the situation.

*Managing the work environment and facilities code of practice 2011* provides details on appropriately assessing risks and determining control measures for remote and isolated work.

## Hazardous manual tasks

A PCBU must manage risks to health and safety from a hazardous manual task. To manage a hazardous manual task means understanding all the relevant matters that could contribute to it. Refer to the *Hazardous manual tasks code of practice 2011*, but consider:

- postures, movements, forces and vibration performed during the task
- the duration and frequency of the task
- workplace environmental conditions
- the design of the work area and layout of the workplace
- the systems of work used
- the nature, size, weight or number of people involved in performing the task.

Common manual task injuries can be caused through tasks that involve handling and restraining livestock or uncoupling equipment. The majority of manual task injuries are through lifting and carrying loads, bending and reaching when performing tasks, repetitive bending and awkward positions or slips, trips and falls. Involve your workers to help identify appropriate solutions which could include:

- eliminating the tasks or parts of the tasks
- redesigning the work area, such as a stockyard, or find a better way of doing the tasks
- lowering the storage heights of objects
- using mechanical aids such as calf cradles, cattle crushes, tailgate loaders, trolleys, forklifts, telehandlers or tractor platforms
- using smaller bags to reduce the loads
- improving training and instructions to workers about the tasks
- ensuring workers have adequate rest breaks.

**Refer to T10 — Manual tasks risk management worksheet**

## Facilities

A PCBU must provide adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, clean drinking water, washing facilities, management of temperature extremes (e.g. shade) and eating facilities.

For more information refer to the *Managing the work environment and facilities code of practice 2011*.

## First aid and emergency procedures

A duty holder must provide access to first aid equipment and an adequate number of trained workers to administer first aid. Refer to the *First aid in the workplace code of practice 2014*.

They must also develop procedures to deal with a workplace emergency such as a fire, and consider evacuation procedures, how to notify emergency services and how to communicate this to relevant workers when implementing the procedures.

It is a good idea to keep a list of the emergency phone numbers readily accessible in the office, in each vehicle, and on the wall of the workshop. At a minimum, the numbers should include the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), doctors, ambulance, fire service and the Poisons Information Centre.

It is also a good idea to have the GPS coordinates of the property on the list so these can be provided to a rescue aircraft or ambulance called to the property.

The emergency plan is in addition to the requirement for a fire and evacuation plan under the Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008, however both these plans can be combined into one plan for the workplace.

## Refer to T11 — Emergency information card

# Personal protective equipment (PPE)

If the PCBU uses PPE to control the risk of injury, they must follow the WHS Regulation which discusses the provision, selection, maintenance and information on how to use it correctly.

A worker should be trained, instructed and have information about the safe and correct use of PPE. If PPE is provided, a worker must use it as per the instructions and training.

Relying on PPE will not reduce the risk of an incident occurring, but it could reduce the severity of an injury. For example, a helmet could reduce the severity of a head injury to a rider of a quad bike, but it would not prevent the incident from happening.

# Plant and machinery

A PCBU with management or control of plant must manage the risks associated with plant. That means maintenance, repair, inspection and testing must be carried out by a competent person.

## Quad bikes

Quad bike incidents are now among the leading causes of injuries and deaths on farms. Workers and employers should assess the risks of operating a quad bike and follow these tips:

- Consider whether a quad bike is the right tool for a particular task.
- Ensure all riders are trained.
- Protect yourself by wearing a properly fitting helmet, eye protection, gloves, sturdy footwear and clothing that covers arms and legs.
- Reduce your speed, especially if you are on rough or uneven ground.
- Be aware of the terrain and objects which have changed due to rain or may be hidden in long grass.
- Leave attachments behind that you don't need. Towing attachments adds to the overall weight and instability of the bike. Take extra care when carrying liquid loads as the weight will shift when turning corners or crossing slopes making the bike unstable.
- Consider whether your quad bike would benefit from the installation of a crush protection device.
- Never let children under 16 use an adult-sized quad bike.

## Tractors

PCBUs should consider each type of tractor hazard and associated risk and then choose and regularly review the control measure to ensure the health and safety of all operators.

Guards should protect the operator and others from moving parts of the tractor which are potentially hazardous, whether performing a normal operation or undergoing routine maintenance.

At a workplace, a tractor weighing between 560 kilograms and 15 000 kilograms must not be used unless it is securely fitted with a rollover protective structure (ROPS), regardless of whether it is new or second hand. A plate or decal confirming its compliance should be attached to the ROPS' frame, or inside the cabin.

It may not be practical to work under trees (in an orchard) or in a place too low (within a building) with an approved ROPS fitted. In this situation, the ROPS may be lowered or removed, but you should ensure your workers take due care when operating without a ROPS and that the ROPS is returned to its normal position after the height restriction is no longer applicable.

The use of canopies with ROPS and falling object protective structures (FOPS) should be considered to minimise the operator's exposure to UV radiation from sunlight.

Follow these tips:

- Never dismount from a moving tractor or adjust or work on implements while they are in motion.
- Do not use or attach implements unless the power take-off (PTO) shaft is guarded.
- Always start a tractor from the driver's seat, not from the ground.
- Make sure the park brake is on and operating effectively before leaving the driver's seat.
- Do not park a tractor on a steep slope.
- Remove the key when the tractor is not in use.
- Make sure all operators are trained to safely use tractors.
- Wear a seat belt where a ROPS is fitted.

All types of rural mobile plant are potentially at risk of roll over, including harvesters, spray rigs and earth moving equipment.

## Guarding

A guard is any shield, cover, casing or physical barrier that prevents contact by a person or their clothing with a moving part. Guards should be provided where any rural plant part is within reach and that could become hazardous during operation, routine maintenance or adjustment. Guards must comply with the relevant Australian standards.

Guards are needed for:

- any rotating shaft, gear, cable, sprocket, chain, clutch, coupling, cam or fan blade
- any crushing or shearing points (e.g. augers and slide blocks, roller feeds and conveyor feeds)
- ground wheels and track gear
- any machine component which cuts, grinds, pulps, crushes, breaks or pulverises farm produce
- hot parts where the surface temperature exceeds 120°C in normal operation.

## High risk work licences

Anyone carrying out high risk work, such as operating a forklift or an elevating work platform, must hold a photographic renewable high risk work licence.

## Electrical safety

Electrical incidents in the agricultural sector usually occur when machinery or irrigation pipes contact overhead powerlines. These contacts can result in death, electric shock or cause significant property damage. Other kinds of electrical incidents are usually caused by a lack of equipment maintenance or unauthorised electrical work.

Workers, machinery and other plant must be kept at a safe distance from powerlines at all times. These exclusion zone distances are the minimum to be used:

Power line voltage (1 kV = 1000 volts)	Examples	Exclusion zone*
Up to 132 kV	Low voltage and high voltage powerlines usually on poles	3 metres
Between 132 kV and 330 kV	High voltage powerlines usually on poles and towers	6 metres
Over 330 kV	High voltage powerlines usually on towers	8 metres

\*Note the above table does not detail all exclusion zone requirements.

You need to determine the height and reach of your machinery and plant used near powerlines and identify and manage hazardous situations. All power line voltages are lethal. You do not need to come into direct contact with powerlines to receive an electric shock. Electricity can ‘jump’ or arc across gaps prior to contact. Be familiar with the layout of the overhead electrical system on or near your property and respect specified exclusion zones for your safety.

You should also be sure that equipment operators and workers are suitably trained and that they can carry out their activities around powerlines in a safe way.

The following tips can help reduce electrical risks:

- Always aim to keep a greater distance from power lines than that stipulated in the exclusion zone clearances.
- Don’t position machinery or equipment directly under powerlines.
- Always use a safety observer when using plant or machinery near powerline exclusion zones – use a safety observer in each work team.
- Always use a licensed electrician to do any electrical work.
- Connect all electrical equipment through a circuit with a safety switch.
- Check equipment for damage and discard any damaged equipment or have it repaired.
- Ensure all leads and cords are protected from damage.

More information can be found at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

## Private property poles

Power poles on rural properties may be owned by an electricity distributor or privately owned. Have someone with appropriate skills and knowledge, such as a licensed electrical contractor, periodically check private power poles on your property for deterioration due to corrosion, rot or termites. If you suspect your power poles are unsafe, arrange for an electrical contractor to inspect them.

A safety inspection is recommended every five years by a qualified electrical contractor who can advise if repairs or replacement are required.

## Hazardous chemicals

Most rural properties, farms and chemical application contractors handle, use and store hazardous chemicals for a range of rural industry activities. Hazardous chemicals means chemicals that have been classified as dangerous goods and/or hazardous substances. Examples include fuels, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), ammonia gas, pesticides, herbicides, various acids and industrial gases.

The hazardous chemical's label provides advice on safe handling, storage and use, and information about the chemical's identity and toxicity. Chemical manufacturers are required to supply a safety data sheet (SDS) that details health hazard information, precautions for use, first aid, safe handling information and storage and disposal procedures.

Workers handling and using hazardous chemicals must be trained (e.g. Auschem, Chemcert).

Hazardous chemicals should be stored:

- in a well-ventilated and well-lit, lockable shed with an impervious floor, which has impact protection and bunding, or other spill containment system to contain leaks and spills
- away from respirators, protective clothing and equipment
- away from incompatible chemicals
- in original containers, with labels intact (if labels come off, always re-label container)
- securely from unauthorised access
- with fire-fighting equipment nearby.

The PCBU is required to identify the hazards and minimise the associated risks by implementing appropriate control measures, such as:

- keeping a register which includes the SDS
- erecting the required placarding for the hazardous chemicals (where specified)
- erecting safety signs to convey appropriate safety information
- providing a manifest for emergency services (where specified)
- developing emergency plans for hazardous chemicals
- eliminating or controlling potential ignition sources around flammable materials
- preventing contamination and interaction of incompatible goods
- immediately cleaning up spills
- decommissioning storage or handling systems that are no longer used
- ensuring workers know how to safely store and handle hazardous chemicals
- ensuring personal protective equipment (PPE) is provided and worn (e.g. respirators, gloves, chemical resistant boots and eye wash)
- preventing access by unauthorised people.



## Managing agricultural chemical spray drift

Spray drift from an application of agricultural chemicals has the potential to adversely affect the health and safety of persons in non-targeted areas. Management practices must either eliminate spray drift, or at least minimise it to a level where it will not cause adverse health impacts.

## Hazardous atmospheres

A duty holder must manage risks associated with a hazardous atmosphere, which is defined as when:

- the atmosphere does not have a safe oxygen level (e.g. grain respiration occurring in grain silos leading to an oxygen depleted atmosphere, or effluent pits depleted in oxygen as a result of microbial action, or use of vehicle exhaust gas to purge a tank or vessel)
- the concentration of oxygen in the atmosphere increases the fire risk (e.g. gas leak from a compressed oxygen cylinder used for welding activities in a confined area raising the oxygen concentration)
- the concentration of flammable gases, vapours, mists, or fumes exceeds five per cent of the lower explosive limit (e.g. tanks and containers containing residual fuel, or use of solvents in enclosed areas)
- combustible dust, such as wood dust, bio-solids, sugar, starch, flour, feed or grain is present in a quantity and form that would result in a hazardous area, where these dusts could divide, accumulate or be suspended in the air to create a hazardous atmosphere.

There are several requirements where businesses must notify WHSQ around certain thresholds for chemical use and storage for their business, as well as locations of abandoned underground tanks or existing pipelines with hazardous chemicals. View more information at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

## Falling objects

A PCBU at a workplace must manage risks to health and safety associated with a falling object if it is likely to injure a person. That includes securing tools and equipment when working at height and ensuring no one is working directly underneath you.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, the PCBU must minimise it by either providing adequate protection for workers, such as an exclusion zone, or preventing an object from falling by using a secure barrier.

# Noise

Employers must protect themselves and their workers from exposure to excessive noise. To do this, you must assess whether noisy activities present a potential risk.

The table below shows the upper noise levels from different farming machinery activities and the allowable exposure times without hearing protection. Noise is excessive where it exceeds the exposure standard of 85 dB(A), averaged over an eight hour period or where a peak noise level of 140 dB (C) occurs.

Typical noise levels from machinery and operations		
Levels dB(A)	Farming machinery or operation	Maximum time
80	Tractor idling	No limit
85	Working tractor with an enclosed cab	8 hours
90	Shearing shed	2 hrs 30 min
90	Chainsaw idling	2 hrs 30 min
95	Angle grinder	48 min
95	Grain auger	48 min
95	Header	48 min
100	Tractor operating under load without a cab	15 min
100	Orchard sprayer	15 min
105	Pig shed at feeding time	4.5 min
120	Chainsaw cutting	8 seconds
140	Aircraft at 15 m	No safe exposure
140 dB(C)	Shotguns/rifles and other firearms far exceed the 140 dB limit	No safe limit: <i>Instantaneous damage</i>

## Confined spaces

The PCBU must manage the risks associated with a confined space at a workplace. Specific examples of possible confined spaces include a hopper, grain silo, field bins, storage tanks (i.e. sewage, fuel and water), wet and dry wells, manure and silage pits, integrated feed system or vats (i.e. milk, cheese or wine).

Designers, importers, suppliers and manufacturers have a standard duty to eliminate or minimise entry into a confined space, so far as is reasonably practicable, in relation to plant or a structure.

Working in a confined space has the potential to increase the risk of injury from noise, being overcome by fumes, gases or depleted oxygen, suffocation, high or low temperatures, manual handling and slips, trips and falls.

If you are working in a confined space, you must follow certain procedures, including:

- placing a stand-by-person outside the confined space to talk to anyone in the confined space and implement emergency procedures if required
- providing PPE, rescue, first-aid and fire suppression equipment and training for workers entering the confined space
- supplying safety harnesses and safety or rescue lines where there is a danger of falling during the ascent or descent to access the confined space
- erecting signs that show entry is only permitted after signing the entry permit
- ensuring the area is well ventilated.

For more information refer to the *Confined spaces code of practice 2011*.

## Cutting and welding

Never cut drums that have contained flammable or combustible liquids or gases. Anyone who cuts or welds metal should be trained, and should have a good understanding of the risks associated with the task.

Drums that contain residual flammable or combustible substances or vapours may explode when exposed to heat. Additionally, drums that have contained substances such as pesticides may release hazardous gases when exposed to heat. Even drums that have been empty for a very long time can contain enough residue substances to explode and/or emit hazardous gas when exposed to heat.

## Falls

Falls by a person from one level to another also need to be managed if it is reasonably likely to cause injury to anyone. They must also ensure that any work that involves the risk of a fall is carried out on the ground or on a solid construction.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk of a fall, then the duty holder must minimise the risk of a fall by providing adequate protection against the risk.

Refer to *Managing the risk of falls at workplaces code of practice 2013* for more information.

# Animal handling

To provide a safe workplace, livestock handling facilities should be well designed and functional from both an animal handling perspective and workers' safety. Consider:

- the design and placement of yard and loading facilities
- separating people and animals
- ensuring livestock handlers have a good working knowledge of animal behaviour
- selecting livestock that demonstrate a preferred temperament.

## Zoonotic diseases

Good hygiene of workers is one way to reduce the risk from zoonotic diseases. Most of them are spread by people coming in contact with the bodily fluids and excrement of animals. Where it is reasonably practicable to assume that a worker is at risk of contact with an animal that may carry Q Fever, the worker should be tested and immunised.

For more information on zoonoses, such as Hendra virus, visit [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au).

## Asbestos

Materials that contain asbestos can be found in buildings, workplaces and dwellings built before 1990. Asbestos can also be found in a variety of building products and friction materials (e.g. cement sheeting or brake disc pads).

A person with management or control of a workplace must ensure asbestos at the workplace has been identified, is clearly indicated and recorded in a register and they have a written asbestos management plan (if asbestos has been identified or is likely to be there).

An asbestos register is not required if the building was constructed after 31 December 1989 and no asbestos has been identified at the workplace, and asbestos is not likely to be present.

An asbestos register must be maintained so it is up to date and readily accessible, but it is not required for on-farm domestic dwellings such as homesteads, cottages, shearer's huts or other worker accommodation. Even cottages rented out privately do not need an asbestos register.

An asbestos management plan helps people with management and control of buildings and other relevant structures to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibres by their staff and site visitors. They must take reasonable steps to label and record asbestos, inform everyone on the premises where asbestos is present, outline the consequences of exposure to asbestos and implement appropriate control measures. The plan should set out clear aims, stating what, when and how it is going to be done.

The WHS Regulation also requires an asbestos management plan where naturally occurring asbestos is identified or likely to be present at a workplace.

Two codes of practice provide guidance on how to manage, control and safely remove asbestos in the workplace are *How to manage asbestos in the workplace code of practice 2011* and *How to safely remove asbestos code of practice 2011*.

An asbestos licence is required for work to remove any amount of friable asbestos or more than ten square metres of non-friable (bonded) asbestos. The removal of ten square metres or less of non-friable (bonded) asbestos does not require a licence, but it can only be performed by someone with adequate qualifications, such as suitable training and sufficient knowledge, experience or skill, to perform the task safely.

For more information visit [www.qld.gov.au/asbestos](http://www.qld.gov.au/asbestos) or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

## Safety of children on farms

Water hazards including dips, dams and troughs are quite often close to the house and are accessible to children. If you have children on your property, consider building safe play areas and adequately supervise young children.

For more information and resources on child farm safety, head to the Farm Safe website at [www.farmsafe.org.au](http://www.farmsafe.org.au). *Children and young workers code of practice 2006* provides practical guidance on how to keep children and young workers safe.

## Integrating health and well-being into safety

Work health initiatives that are integrated with a workplace health and safety program means workers are more likely to respond positively to activities designed to encourage healthy behaviours and lifestyle changes. Incorporating work health initiatives into existing health and safety systems help to strengthen business outcomes, reduce injuries and enhance productivity. A good health and wellbeing program provides a physical and cultural workplace environment that supports workers to make the healthy choice and builds their knowledge and skills in choosing healthy lifestyle behaviours.

The *Work health planning guide*, available at [www.worksafe.qld.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au), is designed to assist businesses take steps to improve the health and wellbeing of workers in a workplace setting. The information and resources in this guide can be applied to businesses of all sizes.

## Templates on CD

- T1 Sample health and safety policy
- T2 Record of staff toolbox meeting
- T3 Risk assessment form
- T4 Risk register
- T5 Task analysis template
- T6 Safe work procedure template
- T7 Induction checklist
- T8 Training and competency record
- T9 Suitable duties template
- T10 Hazardous manual tasks risk assessment worksheet
- T11 Emergency information card

# Serious about farm safety



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