WHS DOCUMENTS & TEMPLATES

DOC-AUD-EXV · Excavation Work Code of Practice Audit Tool

Product Overview

For: Businesses in the harmonised WHS jurisdictions that do or manage excavation work: principal contractors, civil and trade contractors, supervisors and WHS advisers

Version 1.0 · 15 November 2026

An audit tool for the code of practice Excavation work: 31 audit questions, chapter by chapter, each with the code reference and the evidence to look for, scored automatically in Excel, with a dashboard, a corrective action register, a field checklist and a report template.

The excavation work code of practice explains how to manage the risks of excavation work, such as trenches, shafts and tunnels: planning, essential services, securing the work area, emergency plans, plant, falls, atmosphere, excavation methods and preventing ground collapse. This tool turns what the code expects into 31 plain-English audit questions, in the code's own chapter order, each with its chapter and section number and the documents, observations and interviews that would show it is in place.

Rate each question Compliant, Partly, Not compliant or N/A. The workbook scores each chapter and the whole audit automatically, leaving out anything not applicable, draws a dashboard, and gathers every gap into a corrective action register. The field checklist carries the same questions on paper, and the report template turns the results into a short report with sign-off.

It is written once for the harmonised WHS jurisdictions and audits the model code as the Commonwealth approved it (F2016L00416). A short table shows which edition applies in each of NSW, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the ACT, the Northern Territory and Comcare. Victoria has its own compliance codes. Made by Orana Skills Centre.

What is included

Item	File
Excel audit workbook: 31 audit questions in 6 chapters, each with its code reference and the evidence to look for, automatic scores, a dashboard and a corrective action register	02_AUDIT_TOOL/Audit Workbook.xlsx
Field audit checklist with the same questions, to print and carry on the walk-through	02_AUDIT_TOOL/Field Audit Checklist.docx and .pdf
Audit report template: executive summary, scope and method, overall and chapter scores, key findings, actions and sign-off	03_AUDIT_REPORT/Audit Report Template.docx and .pdf
How to use this audit tool: when to audit, who should audit, how to rate and evidence, and how to follow up, with the differences between jurisdictions	01_START_HERE/How to Use This Audit Tool.pdf
Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms and Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (PDF)

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How to Use This Audit Tool

Excavation Work Code of Practice Audit Tool

What this tool audits

The excavation work code of practice explains how to manage the risks of excavation work, such as trenches, shafts and tunnels: planning, essential services, securing the work area, emergency plans, plant, falls, atmosphere, excavation methods and preventing ground collapse. This tool audits the model Code of Practice Excavation work, developed by Safe Work Australia, as the Commonwealth approved it: Work Health and Safety (Excavation Work) Code of Practice 2015 (F2016L00416), in force from 31 March 2016. Each jurisdiction approves its own edition, and some have updated it since: see the jurisdiction differences.

The tool has 31 audit questions in 6 chapters. Each gives the chapter and section it comes from, so you can read the code itself, and the evidence that would show it is in place.

File	What it is for
Audit Workbook (Excel)	The main tool: audit details, the checklist with ratings and actions, the dashboard of scores, and the corrective action register
Field Audit Checklist (Word, PDF)	The same questions on paper, for the walk-through
Audit Report Template (Word, PDF)	The report to the people who must act on the findings

When to use it

- On a schedule: at least once a year where the code's hazards are present, and more often where the risks are high or the work changes often
- Before an external audit, an inspection or a tender that asks how you manage these risks
- After an incident, a near miss or a complaint that points to a gap
- After a change: new work, plant, premises, people or contractors
- To check that the actions from the last audit were done and are working

Who should audit

- Someone who knows the code and the work, and has the time to do it properly
- Someone who is not auditing their own work. In a small business, a manager from another area or an outside adviser can do it
- With the people who do the work: involve health and safety representatives, and talk to workers on every shift audited
- With the authority to see the records and the workplace, and to report to someone who can act

How to rate

Rating	Use it when
Compliant	What the code expects is in place, it is working, and you saw evidence of it: a record, the thing itself, or consistent answers from the people doing the work.
Partly	Some of it is in place, or it is in place but not working well, not followed everywhere, or not evidenced. Raise an action.
Not compliant	It is not in place, or what is there does not control the risk. Raise an action, and act now if anyone is at risk of serious harm.

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Field Audit Checklist

Excavation Work Code of Practice Audit Tool

Site		Auditor	
Date		Scope	

How to use it

- Take this checklist on the walk-through. Look for the evidence, tick a rating and note what you saw. Then enter the results in the Audit Workbook, which scores them.
- C: Compliant (in place, working, evidenced). P: Partly. NC: Not compliant. N/A: does not apply here (say why). Raise an action for every P and NC.
- Ref is the chapter and section of the code of practice Excavation work (the model code as the Commonwealth approved it (F2016L00416)).

No.	Ref	Audit question	Evidence to look for	Rating	Notes
1 Duties and what is required					
1	1.2	Do the duty holders for the excavation, such as the person commissioning it, the designer, the principal contractor and the contractors, consult, cooperate and coordinate?	Document: Coordination records. Ask: Contractors.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
2	1.3	Are workers consulted on excavation hazards and controls?	Document: Consultation records. Ask: Workers.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
2 The risk management process					
3	2.1	Have the excavation hazards been identified, such as ground collapse, falls, essential services, plant, hazardous atmospheres, water and nearby structures?	Document: Hazard identification records.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
4	2.2	Are the risks assessed, with information such as geotechnical advice where needed?	Document: Risk assessments, geotechnical reports.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
5	2.3	Are the risks controlled using the hierarchy of control?	Document: Controls in the SWMS or risk assessment. Observe: Controls on site.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
6	2.4	Are controls reviewed, including after changes in ground conditions, weather or the work, and after incidents?	Document: Review records.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
3 Planning the excavation work					
7	3.1	On a construction project, does the principal contractor manage the excavation risks in its WHS management plan?	Document: The WHS management plan.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	
8	3.2	Has the designer considered excavation risks, such as ground support and nearby structures, and given the information to those doing the work?	Document: Design documents, the safety report.	☐ C ☐ P ☐ NC ☐ N/A	

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END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

This sample shows a few pages, so you can judge the layout and the quality. An audit tool for the code of practice Excavation work: 31 audit questions, chapter by chapter, each with the code reference and the evidence to look for, scored automatically in Excel, with a dashboard, a corrective action register, a field checklist and a report template.

What the full product contains

- **Excel audit workbook: 31 audit questions in 6 chapters, each with its code reference and the evidence to look for, automatic scores, a dashboard and a corrective action register**
  02_AUDIT_TOOL/Audit Workbook.xlsx
- **Field audit checklist with the same questions, to print and carry on the walk-through**
  02_AUDIT_TOOL/Field Audit Checklist.docx and .pdf
- **Audit report template: executive summary, scope and method, overall and chapter scores, key findings, actions and sign-off**
  03_AUDIT_REPORT/Audit Report Template.docx and .pdf
- **How to use this audit tool: when to audit, who should audit, how to rate and evidence, and how to follow up, with the differences between jurisdictions**
  01_START_HERE/How to Use This Audit Tool.pdf
- **Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms and Version Information**
  01_START_HERE/ (PDF)

Formats

- Excel (.xlsx), editable, with dropdowns and formulas (no macros)
- Word (.docx), editable, with your logo and business name in the header
- PDF copies, for printing blank
- Delivered as a single ZIP download

Get the full editable documents

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