WHS DOCUMENTS & TEMPLATES

DOC-SWMS-TPL · SWMS Template

Product Overview

For: Australian builders, principal contractors, subcontractors and trades doing high risk construction work, and WHS advisers

Version 1.0 · 15 November 2026

A safe work method statement for high risk construction work: tick the kinds of work it covers, then the checks before work starts, each step's hazards and controls with risk ratings before and after, monitoring and review, emergencies and the crew's sign-on.

The SWMS lists the high risk construction work categories in plain words to tick, then the licences, plant, permits, PPE, chemicals, emergency arrangements and plans the work needs. The work steps table records each step's hazards and risks, the controls and how they are put in place, and who is responsible, with a risk rating before and after on a 5x5 matrix. A worked example shows the level of detail.

It sets out how the work is monitored and when the SWMS is reviewed, the emergency arrangements, and a sign-on for every worker who reads and understands it. A stop-work box makes the rule clear: work not being done in line with the SWMS stops.

The guide sets out what a SWMS must contain, and where the jurisdictions differ, including Victoria's list of high risk construction work and Western Australia's.

Written once for Australia, to the model WHS laws, in plain terms that also work in Victoria. The guide's state and territory notes show where the law differs, including the regulator to contact. Made by Orana Skills Centre.

What is included

Item	File
Safe work method statement: high risk construction work categories, before-work checks, work steps, controls and risk ratings, monitoring, emergencies, sign-on and a risk matrix	02_TEMPLATE/Safe Work Method Statement.docx and .pdf
How to Use This Template: how to complete and adapt it, the law in brief, state and territory notes, records and every placeholder	01_START_HERE/How to Use This Template.pdf
Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms and Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (PDF)

Who it is for

- Subcontractors and trades who must prepare a SWMS before high risk construction work
- Builders and principal contractors who review SWMS
- WHS advisers who want a clear, readable SWMS that crews will actually use

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How to Use This Template

How to complete, adapt and keep the swms template

1 What this template is for

A SWMS sets out the high risk construction work to be done, the hazards and risks, the controls, and how the controls will be put in place, monitored and reviewed. It is written for the people doing the work, so they can see what keeps them safe and when to stop.

A SWMS is not a control. The guardrail, the shoring and the exclusion zone are the controls; the SWMS describes them, and the supervisor checks they are there and working.

2 How to use it

Step	What to do
1	Before the work starts, plan it with the workers who will do it. Walk the site, and look at the conditions, the plant and the work nearby.
2	Tick the kinds of high risk construction work in part 1. If none applies, a SWMS is not legally required, but a safe work procedure may still be needed.
3	Fill in part 2, then break the work into steps in part 3: for each, the hazards and risks, the controls (most effective first) and who does what.
4	Rate the risk before and after the controls on the matrix. An Extreme or High risk needs higher order controls, not only rules and PPE.
5	Give a copy to the principal contractor before the work starts, if the work is part of a construction project.
6	Read the SWMS through with the crew, check they understand it, and have each person sign on. Keep it on site where they can get to it.
7	Check the work is done the way the SWMS says. Stop work that is not, and review the SWMS when a control changes, after an incident, or when the work or conditions change.

Make it work, not just exist

- Write for the crew, not the auditor: short steps, plain words, the real controls. A long generic SWMS nobody reads protects nobody.
- Read it aloud and ask questions back. Low literacy and pride both stop people saying they do not understand.
- If the job changes, stop and review. Do not let the SWMS describe work as imagined while the crew does something else.

3 The law, in brief

The WHS laws require a business doing high risk construction work to make sure a SWMS is prepared before the work starts. The SWMS must identify the high risk construction work, set out the hazards and risks, describe the controls and how they will be put in place, monitored and reviewed, take into account the conditions at the site (and the WHS management plan for a construction project), and be set out so the people using it can readily get to it and understand it.

The business must make sure the work is done in line with the SWMS, and if it is not, stop the work immediately or as soon as it is safe to, and restart only in line with it. On a construction project, a copy goes to the principal contractor before the work starts. The SWMS is reviewed when the controls are reviewed, and kept until the work is finished, or

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Safe Work Method Statement

SWMS for high risk construction work

Business preparing the SWMS (name, ABN)		**Principal contractor (if any)**	
Project and site address		**Work activity covered**	
Prepared by (name, role)		**Date prepared**	
Workers and HSRs consulted		**SWMS given to the principal contractor (date)**	
Supervisor of the work		**Review date**	

How to use it

- Prepare the SWMS before the high risk construction work starts, with the workers who will do it. Write it for this job, this site and these conditions.
- Read it through with the crew before they start, check they understand it, and have each person sign on. A SWMS nobody has read or understood is a hazard, not a control.
- Do the work the way the SWMS says. If the work is not being done that way, stop it, as soon as it is safe to, and restart only in line with the SWMS, or after the SWMS is reviewed.

SAMPLE

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SWMS Template

END OF THE FREE SAMPLE

This sample shows a few pages, so you can judge the layout and the quality. A safe work method statement for high risk construction work: tick the kinds of work it covers, then the checks before work starts, each step's hazards and controls with risk ratings before and after, monitoring and review, emergencies and the crew's sign-on.

What the full product contains

- **Safe work method statement: high risk construction work categories, before-work checks, work steps, controls and risk ratings, monitoring, emergencies, sign-on and a risk matrix**
  02_TEMPLATE/Safe Work Method Statement.docx and .pdf
- **How to Use This Template: how to complete and adapt it, the law in brief, state and territory notes, records and every placeholder**
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- **Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms and Version Information**
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Formats

- Word (.docx), editable, with your logo and business name in the header
- PDF copies of the Word documents, for printing blank
- Delivered as a single ZIP download

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