TOOLBOX TALK AWARENESS PACKAGES

HAZ-DRN · Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness

Product Overview

Audience: Workers and supervisors who work beside dams, rivers, channels, ponds, tanks or wharves: farms, councils, water and civil works, ports and parks · Duration: 20–30 minutes

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026

For anyone who works beside dams, rivers, channels, ponds or wharves: why people drown at work, keeping back from the edge, never working alone near water, lifejackets, and how to rescue someone without going in: reach or throw, don't go.

People drown at work when they slip from a bank, fall from a wharf or a pump platform, or are trapped when a vehicle or machine goes into a dam, a channel or flood water. Water is often colder, deeper and faster than it looks, banks can be soft and slippery, and boots and work clothes make swimming hard. Many people drown trying to rescue someone else.

This talk covers where the risk is, the controls from the top down (doing the job from land, barriers and edge protection, safe access, and keeping vehicles back from the edge), never working alone near water, wearing and looking after a lifejacket, flood water, and rescuing without entering the water: reach or throw, don't go. It is awareness, not water rescue, boating or lifesaving training.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session participants will be able to:

- Name where the risk of drowning is at work: dams, rivers, channels, ponds, tanks, wharves and flood water
- Explain why water is more dangerous than it looks, and why many people drown trying to rescue someone
- Use the controls in order: avoid the edge, barriers and safe access, then lifejackets
- Never work alone near water, and know the rescue plan before you start
- Wear a lifejacket suited to the work, and check it before each use
- Rescue without entering the water: call for help, then reach or throw, don't go

What it covers

Module	Covers
Why it matters	Where people drown at work; Water is worse than it looks; Rescuers drown too
Controls that work	Keep back from the edge; Never alone, with a rescue plan; Lifejackets
Your part	Reach or throw, don't go; Flood water; Report it

Activities

- Where is the risk: workers look at four jobs, from fixing a pump on a dam to clearing a blocked channel, and decide how to keep people out of the water

© 2026 Orana Skills Centre. All rights reserved.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

- What would you do: workers decide what to do in four situations, from a workmate in the water to a flooded causeway on the way to a job

What is in the package

Item	File
Editable PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes, plus PDF	02_TRAINING_PRESENTATION/Training Presentation.pptx and .pdf
Facilitator guide with a running sheet, discussion prompts and model answers	03_FACILITATOR_GUIDE/Facilitator Guide.docx and .pdf
Participant handout with the key points to take away	04_PARTICIPANT_HANDOUT/Participant Handout.docx and .pdf
Attendance record form, to capture who attended, when, and who facilitated	06_RECORDS/Attendance Record.docx and .pdf
Excel attendance register	06_RECORDS/Attendance Register.xlsx
Multiple-choice theory assessment, to record understanding if your business wants to	05_ASSESSMENT/Theory Assessment.docx and .pdf
Answer key for the assessment	05_ASSESSMENT/Assessment Answer Key.docx and .pdf
Certificate template	06_RECORDS/Certificate Template.docx
Start here: Read Me First, Product Overview, Permitted Use Terms, Version Information	01_START_HERE/ (four PDFs)

What you need to deliver it

- A facilitator such as a supervisor, leading hand or WHS adviser who has read the facilitator guide and knows your site's arrangements for the topic
- A screen or projector, or printed slides or handouts: it works in a crib room, site office or on a video call
- Your own site procedures for the topic, to point to during the session

Questions

Does it teach water rescue or swimming? No. It teaches workers never to go into the water to rescue someone, and to call for help, then reach with a pole or branch, or throw a rope or something that floats. Water rescue, boating and lifesaving need their own training. The talk names no lifejacket ratings: choose one suited to the work, as the maker's instructions and your local rules say.

Can we add our own site procedures and photos? Yes. The slides, handout and guide are editable, and the facilitator guide marks the places to add your own procedures, contacts and photos of your workplace.

Do we have to use the assessment? No. It is there if your business wants a record that each worker understood the key points. The attendance record on its own shows who attended and when.

Version 1.0 · 22 November 2026 · Orana Skills Centre. © 2026 Orana Skills Centre. All rights reserved.

© 2026 Orana Skills Centre. All rights reserved.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

TOOLBOX TALK

Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness

Closer than it looks: staying out of the water, and rescuing without going in

20–30 minutes · Workers and supervisors who work beside dams, rivers, channels, ponds, tanks or wharves: farms, councils, water and civil works, ports and parks

[Company name] · [Date] · [Facilitator name]

DRN

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

What this talk is, and is not

This talk covers

- ✓ Where the risk of drowning is
- ✓ Keeping back from the edge
- ✓ Never alone, and lifejackets
- ✓ Reach or throw, don't go

This talk is not

- ✕ Water rescue or lifesaving training
- ✕ Boat or vessel operation
- ✕ Tank or pit entry
- ✕ Our procedure: **[Our procedure for work near water]**

Awareness only. Nobody is taught to go into the water. Boats and confined spaces need their own training.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

Where people drown at work

Most people never meant to be in the water.

- Slipping from a bank, wharf or pump platform
- Vehicles, quads and machines rolling into dams
- Driving or walking into flood water
- Falling into channels, ponds or open tanks
- Going in to rescue someone else

A composite example

- A farmhand goes alone to check a dam pump. The bank gives way and he slides in.
- His boots fill with water. Nobody knows where he is for hours.

Nobody plans to fall in. Plan for it anyway.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

Duties under health and safety laws

The business must

- Identify water hazards at every site
- Control them, starting at the top
- Provide lifejackets and rescue gear
- Plan for emergencies, and train workers

You must

- Follow the procedure and plan
- Never work alone near water
- Wear and check your lifejacket
- Report hazards and near misses

Most health and safety laws give these duties. Check the law where you work (in Australia, WHS or OHS laws).

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

The order of controls near water

1. **Elimination** Do the job from land, or without going near the edge
2. **Substitution** Pumps and gauges moved to where they are safe to reach
3. **Isolation** Fences, barriers and guardrails at the edge
4. **Engineering** Platforms, firm access, wheel stops for vehicles
5. **Administrative** Never alone, rescue plan, check conditions, training
6. **PPE** Lifejacket suited to the work, checked and worn

HIGHER ORDER

Higher order controls remove or control the hazard at the source, or put a barrier between people and the hazard.

LOWER ORDER

Lower order controls rely on people to do a thing or wear a thing, every time, tired, distracted or rushed.

Behaviours are not on the hierarchy, but behaviours and culture decide whether every control on it actually works.

Keep people out of the water first. Lifejackets come last.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.

TOOLBOX TALK · HAZ-DRN

Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness

Participant handout · keep this

Water at work is often colder, deeper and faster than it looks. Stay out of it, and never go in to rescue. Keep this page.

The order of controls

1. Do the job from land, away from the edge
2. Move pumps and gauges to safe places
3. Fences, barriers and guardrails
4. Platforms, firm access, wheel stops
5. Never alone, rescue plan, training
6. Lifejacket suited to the work, worn

Someone in the water

- ■ Shout for help and call your local emergency number (000 in Australia)
- ■ Reach or throw, don't go

Never

- ■ Work alone near water
- ■ Drive or walk into flood water

Every job

- ☐ Can this job be done without going near the edge?
- ☐ Is there a barrier, safe access, or a firm, level place to work?
- ☐ Is someone with me, watching, who knows the rescue plan?
- ☐ Is my lifejacket on, checked and done up?
- ☐ Is rescue gear here: a throw rope, a float or a reaching pole?

Lifejackets

- ■ Check before each use; done up
- ■ Inflatables serviced as the maker says

Who and where

- ■ **[Rescue equipment location]**
- ■ **[Who to report to here]**

Never work alone near water, wear your lifejacket, and reach or throw, don't go.

This is awareness training. It is not a licence, a ticket, a permit or a competency. It is not water rescue, boating or lifesaving training.

© 2026 Orana Skills Centre. All rights reserved.

SAMPLE · HAZ-DRN Working Near Water and Drowning Awareness v1.0 · The full package contains the complete materials.