# Safe Work Method Statements: quick reference

Practical guide for high-risk construction work

**A SWMS should tell workers and supervisors what high-risk work is happening, what could cause harm, what controls are required, and how those controls will be implemented, monitored and reviewed.**

| Topic | Practical guidance |
|---|---|
| **1. When it is required** | A SWMS is required before high-risk construction work starts. Examples include work with a risk of falling more than 2 metres, work in or near a trench deeper than 1.5 metres, work on or near energised electrical installations or services, and work in an area with movement of powered mobile plant. |
| **2. Who prepares it** | The PCBU carrying out the high-risk construction work must prepare a SWMS, or ensure one has been prepared. Workers and their health and safety representatives, if any, must be consulted when the SWMS is prepared. Where duties overlap, PCBUs must consult, cooperate and coordinate who will prepare it. |
| **3. What it must cover** | The high-risk construction activities, hazards and risks, control measures, and how those measures will be implemented, monitored and reviewed. |
| **4. What good looks like** | Controls are specific and usable. Avoid vague wording like “use appropriate PPE”. A supervisor or worker should be able to see exactly what has to happen. |

## Control measures

- Consider elimination first, then substitution, isolation and engineering controls, then administrative controls, then PPE for remaining risk.
- Explain what the control is, who applies it, when it applies, and how it will be checked.
- Review generic material for the actual workplace, workers, sequencing, interface with other trades and local conditions.

# SWMS decision checklist

## Before work starts

☐ Has the high-risk work been identified?

☐ Has the PCBU prepared or confirmed the SWMS?

☐ Have workers directly engaged in the high-risk work and their health and safety representatives, if any, been consulted?

☐ Has the principal contractor received the SWMS where required?

☐ Are controls specific enough to use?

## During the work

☐ Has the team been briefed?

☐ Is the work being done in line with the SWMS?

☐ Are controls being monitored?

☐ Will work stop immediately, or as soon as it is safe, if the SWMS is not followed?

## Review triggers

☐ The work, workplace, system of work or location changes.

☐ A new hazard is identified.

☐ New information about a hazard becomes available.

☐ A notifiable incident occurs.

☐ Controls are inadequate or are not being followed.

### Use note

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