

Greetings all. Today's topic is about standardising Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS).

SWMS are a crucial part of conducting High-Risk Work (HRW) and are required by law. However, in the past there has been a degree of confusion surrounding what is required on a SWMS and when they are required.

SWMS are, not a procedure but rather a 'Statement of Control Measures' that must:

1. Identify the High-Risk Construction work.
2. Specify hazards and risks related to the work.
3. Show measures to control the risks.
4. Show how the above is implemented, controlled and reviewed.

If the activity falls into one of the following categories as nominated by WorkSafe VIC, you require a SWMS.



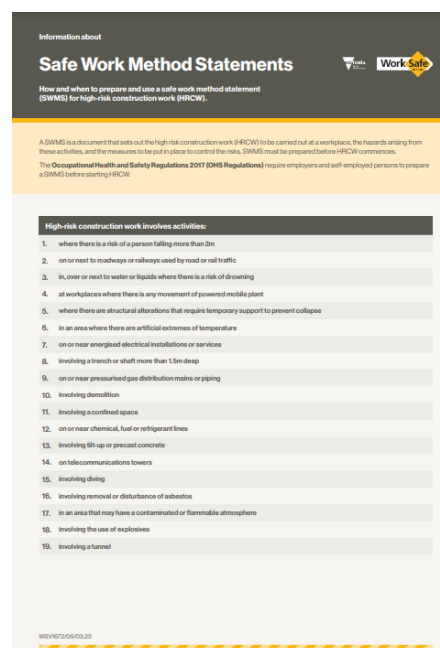
These activities are:

- where there is a risk of a person falling more than 2m
- on or next to roadways or railways used by road or rail traffic
- in, over or next to water or liquids where there is a risk of drowning
- at workplaces where there is any movement of powered mobile plant
- where there are structural alterations that require temporary support to prevent collapse
- in an area where there are artificial extremes of temperature
- on or near energised electrical installations or services
- involving a trench or shaft more than 1.5m deep
- on or near pressurised gas distribution mains or piping
- involving demolition
- involving a confined space
- on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
- involving tilt-up or precast concrete
- on telecommunications towers
- involving diving
- involving removal or disturbance of asbestos
- in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
- involving the use of explosives
- involving a tunnel

Long-winded SWMS containing irrelevant information will reduce the likelihood of someone reading or using the document for its intended purpose.

This month, WorkSafe Victoria released its updated template and supporting guidance to assist in creating a Safe Work Method Statement before High-Risk Construction Work (HRCW) is commenced.

This template and guidance can be found [here](#).



SWMS should be completed before work starts by the duty holder:

- Employers: The employer of the employees intending to undertake HRCW
- The self-employed person: if they or their engaged contractors are intending to undertake HRCW Labour hire
- The employer and host employer of the employees intending to undertake HRCW

Involving the relevant employees, their Health and Safety Representatives and supervisors at the location of the proposed works, ensures that everyone can engage in the SWMS preparation and provide input.



SWMS must be set out and expressed in a way that is readily accessible and understandable to persons who use it.

If you are a Principal Contractor or duty holder, your obligations are to obtain the SWMS before the work starts and ensure compliance via supervision. The SWMS should be added to your Work Health and Safety Management plan, including arrangements for collecting, assessing, monitoring and reviewing the SWMS.

If the scope of the work changes or if there is any concern the risks are not being properly controlled, the SWMS must be revised in consultation with the affected employees and their health and safety representatives (HSRs).

With a SWMS there is no transfer of duty. You cannot contract out their WHS responsibilities and as a PC or duty holder, you have a duty of care for yourself and all of the workers you engage.

Remember: “You can delegate Authority, but you can’t delegate Responsibility”

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