Refrigerant Handling Plan

Table of Contents

Purpose and Scope

This Refrigerant Handling Plan sets out the work health and safety (WHS) arrangements, procedures and controls for the safe storage, handling, recovery, charging and disposal of refrigerants used by [Company Name]. It applies to all workers, including employees, labour hire workers, apprentices, contractors and visitors who may be exposed to refrigerants or associated plant and equipment.

This plan is designed for use in air conditioning and refrigeration, and automotive and mechanical environments, including:

- Installation, commissioning, maintenance and decommissioning of split systems, ducted systems, commercial refrigeration and cold rooms.
- Servicing and repair of vehicle air conditioning systems in workshops and mobile service operations.

The objectives of this plan are to:

- Prevent injury, illness and environmental harm associated with refrigerant use.
- Ensure compliance with WHS legislation, codes of practice and industry standards.
- Provide clear procedures for safe refrigerant handling across all [Company Name] operations.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities and training requirements.

Legislative and Other Requirements

[Company Name] will manage refrigerant hazards in accordance with applicable Australian legislation, standards and guidance material, including but not limited to:

- Work Health and Safety Act and Regulations (jurisdiction-specific).
- Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management legislation and licensing requirements.
- Safe Work Australia model Codes of Practice, including:
  - How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks.
  - Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals in the Workplace.
- Relevant Australian Standards for refrigerating systems, pressure equipment and electrical safety.
- State/territory specific guidance from WHS regulators and environmental protection authorities.

[Company Name] will monitor legislative changes and update this Refrigerant Handling Plan, associated procedures and training as required.

Roles and Responsibilities

Officers (e.g. Directors, Senior Management)

Officers are responsible for exercising due diligence to ensure [Company Name] complies with WHS duties in relation to refrigerant handling. This includes:

- Ensuring appropriate resources and processes are in place to manage refrigerant risks.
- Verifying that refrigerant plant, equipment and storage facilities are properly maintained.
- Ensuring competent personnel are appointed to supervise refrigerant work.
- Reviewing WHS performance indicators related to refrigerant incidents, near misses and compliance.

Managers and Supervisors

Managers and supervisors must:

- Implement this Refrigerant Handling Plan in their areas of responsibility.
- Ensure risk assessments (including SWMS where required) are completed, reviewed and followed.
- Confirm that only appropriately licensed and trained workers handle refrigerants.
- Provide and maintain appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Monitor work practices, correct unsafe behaviours and enforce safe work procedures.
- Ensure incidents, leaks, near misses and environmental releases are reported and investigated.

Workers (Including Apprentices and Technicians)

All workers who handle or may be exposed to refrigerants must:

- Follow this plan, safe work procedures and instructions from supervisors.
- Hold and maintain any required refrigerant handling or automotive air conditioning licences.
- Use PPE and safety equipment as required and report any defects.
- Immediately report refrigerant leaks, spills, near misses or equipment faults.
- Not intentionally vent or release refrigerant to atmosphere, except where permitted by law.
- Participate in WHS consultation, training and toolbox talks.

Contractors and Subcontractors

Contractors engaged to perform refrigerant-related work must:

- Provide evidence of appropriate licences, qualifications and insurances.
- Comply with [Company Name] WHS policies, procedures and site rules.
- Provide task-specific risk assessments/SWMS for high-risk construction work.
- Use recovery equipment and cylinders that meet relevant Australian standards.
- Report all incidents and near misses to the [Company Name] supervisor.

Visitors and Customers

Visitors and customers must:

- Comply with site induction requirements and follow all safety directions.
- Stay clear of designated refrigerant work areas unless authorised and supervised.

Consultation, Communication and Review

[Company Name] will consult with workers and, where applicable, health and safety representatives (HSRs) on matters related to refrigerant safety, including:

- Introduction of new refrigerants, equipment or work methods.
- Changes to this Refrigerant Handling Plan and related procedures.
- Outcomes of incident investigations and audit findings.

Consultation will occur through toolbox talks, WHS meetings, informal discussions and documented feedback mechanisms. This plan will be reviewed:

- At least every 12 months.
- Following any significant incident, near miss or refrigerant leak.
- When new refrigerants, systems or technologies are introduced.
- When legislative or standards changes occur.

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Refrigerant Hazards

Refrigerants used in air conditioning, refrigeration and automotive systems present a range of hazards, which may include:

- Asphyxiation in confined or poorly ventilated spaces.
- Cardiac sensitisation and arrhythmia for certain refrigerant types.
- Cold burns and frostbite from liquid refrigerant contact.
- High-pressure release and projectile hazards.
- Fire and explosion risks for flammable refrigerants (e.g. hydrocarbons, HFOs, some HFC blends).