

Butchery Safety

Business Name:		ABN:	
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	

SAMPLE

RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	Engineering Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
4A	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
3H	Review and approve additional controls for the task parts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. WHS Governance, Consultation and Safety Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a documented WHS management system aligned to WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulations Inadequate consultation with workers on butchery-specific risks (e.g. cutting, sawing, cleaving, mincing, organ separation) Lack of clear WHS roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for supervisors and leading hands Poor safety culture where production is prioritised over safe systems of work Failure to provide mechanisms for workers to report hazards, near misses and concerns without fear of reprisal Inadequate review of WHS performance indicators such as injury trends, near misses and non-conformances 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal WHS management system that incorporates butchery-specific risk management processes, consistent with WHS Act 2011 and relevant Codes of Practice Define and document WHS responsibilities and delegated authorities for managers, supervisors, and workers within the butchery operation Establish a WHS committee or regular toolbox meetings specifically addressing butchery hazards including cutting, deboning, mincing and organ separation tasks Introduce and communicate a Just Culture policy that encourages transparent reporting and learning from incidents without automatic blame Implement a structured hazard and incident reporting system (e.g. digital platform) with clear processes for triage, investigation, corrective actions and feedback to staff Set WHS performance indicators (e.g. number of hazard reports, completion of corrective actions, training completion rates) and review them monthly at management meetings Conduct annual management reviews of the WHS system to ensure continued suitability, adequacy and effectiveness for butchery operations 	3H
2. Plant and Equipment Procurement, Design and Guarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procurement of butchery plant (industrial mincers, meat slicers, poultry saws, band saws, meat grinders) without formal risk assessment Inadequate fixed and interlocked guarding on cutting, sawing, cleaving and mincing equipment Lack of fail-safe controls, emergency stops and two-hand controls where required Use of non-compliant, modified or homemade equipment for deboning, trimming and organ separation tasks Poor design of control layouts leading to inadvertent activation of moving parts during cleaning or adjustment Inadequate separation between pedestrian walkways and moving plant such as carcass rails and hoists 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal plant procurement and approval procedure requiring documented WHS risk assessment before purchase of any butchery equipment Specify compliance with relevant Australian Standards for all cutting, sawing, slicing, mincing and tenderising equipment, including appropriate guarding and interlocks Ensure all high-risk plant is fitted with clearly labelled and accessible emergency stop devices that are tested as part of commissioning and routine checks Prohibit use of modified, non-original or homemade butchery equipment unless modifications have been engineered, risk assessed and approved by a competent person Standardise control panel layouts and use guarded or recessed start buttons to reduce accidental activation during cleaning or set-up Design plant layout so that carcass rails, hoists and mechanical handling systems are segregated from pedestrian paths using barriers, floor markings and signage Maintain a plant register that documents risks, control measures, inspection and maintenance requirements for each piece of butchery equipment 	2M
3. Machine Isolation, Lock-out and Maintenance Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a formal lock-out tag-out (LOTO) procedure for maintenance and 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a written isolation and lock-out tag-out procedure for all butchery plant, including clear steps for isolating, locking, testing and re-energising equipment 	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cleaning of saws, slicers, mincers and tenderisers Maintenance performed while machinery is still energised (electrical, pneumatic, hydraulic or stored mechanical energy) Inadequate servicing regimes for cutting and deboning equipment leading to malfunction or unexpected movement Failure to replace or repair damaged guards, interlocks or safety devices in a timely manner Contractors performing maintenance without site-specific induction or knowledge of butchery risks 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide dedicated lock-out kits and train all relevant staff (including contractors) in correct LOTO application and verification of isolation Establish a planned preventive maintenance schedule for all high-risk plant (e.g. industrial mincers, meat slicers, poultry saws, carcass hoists) in line with manufacturers' recommendations Introduce a defect reporting and tagging system that prevents use of equipment with damaged guards, interlocks or safety controls until rectified by a competent person Require service providers and contractors to complete a site-specific induction covering butchery hazards and isolation requirements before commencing work Keep detailed maintenance and inspection records to demonstrate compliance and allow analysis of recurring plant reliability issues 	
4. Competency, Training and Supervision of Butchery Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers performing cutting, sawing, cleaving, deboning, trimming and organ separation without verified competence Inadequate instruction on safe use of knives, saws, slicers, mincers and tenderisers Lack of structured supervision for new or young workers in high risk tasks Informal on-the-job training that embeds unsafe shortcuts and poor practices Insufficient refresher training on existing procedures and plant upgrades 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
5. Knife Management, Sharpening and Safe Handling Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a controlled system for issuing, sharpening and maintaining knives Use of blunt or damaged knives increasing force required and risk of slips and lacerations during deboning and trimming Uncontrolled storage and transport of knives creating cut risks to others 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient training in safe knife handling, passing and storage practices 		[REDACTED]	
6. Layout, Workflow and Traffic Management in the Butchery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly designed workflow leading to congestion and close worker proximity to moving blades and machinery Crossing paths between workers handling heavy carcasses and those operating cutting and slicing equipment Inadequate separation of clean and dirty zones for raw meat handling and organ separation, increasing contamination risks Restricted access to emergency stop, exits, first aid and spill kits due to poor layout 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
7. Manual Handling and Mechanical Aids for Carcasses and Meat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manual handling of carcasses, primal cuts and close vessels leading to musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) Repetitive bending, twisting and reaching associated with deboning, trimming and organ separation tasks Inadequate provision or maintenance of hoists, rails, trolleys and lifting devices for heavy meat handling Lack of systems to rotate tasks and manage cumulative manual handling exposure 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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8. Hazardous Biological and Chemical Exposure Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to blood, bodily fluids and animal by-products during draining of blood, organ separation and handling raw meat Inadequate controls for zoonotic diseases and pathogens (e.g. bacteria in raw meat and offal) Poor systems for handling, storing and using cleaning chemicals and sanitisers used on butchery equipment and surfaces Lack of documented sanitation and decontamination procedures for plant and work areas 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
9. Environmental Conditions, Temperature and Slips/Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold working environments leading to reduced dexterity and increased knife and cutting injuries Wet, greasy or bloody floors from meat processing and blood splashing increasing slip risk Inadequate lighting around slicers, mincers and tenderisers impacting visibility of cutting lines and hazards Poor drainage and floor gradients causing pooling of liquids in work zones 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
10. Electrical, Noise and Other Physical Hazards from Butchery Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical faults in industrial mincers, meat slicers, poultry saws and tenderisers due to inadequate inspection and testing Excessive noise from mechanical plant leading to hearing damage over time Vibration exposure from powered hand tools used in meat processing 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate guarding or labelling of electrical switchboards and isolation points in the butchery 		[REDACTED]	
11. Emergency Preparedness, Incident Response and First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of specific emergency procedures for severe cuts, amputations and crush injuries from saws, slicers and mincers Insufficient first aid equipment and trained first aiders on shifts with high butchery activity Inadequate arrangements for managing biological spills (blood, offal) and chemical spills from cleaning agents Poor communication systems for summoning urgent assistance in refrigerated or isolated areas 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
12. Fatigue, Work Scheduling and Psychosocial Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended shifts, overtime and high production pressures leading to fatigue and reduced attention when using sharp tools and machinery Insufficient rest breaks, especially in cold environments and high concentration tasks like trimming and deboning Work-related stress, bullying or harassment in high-pressure meat production environments impacting mental health and decision-making Lack of systems to monitor and manage psychosocial hazards in the butchery 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
13. Contractor, Visitor and Supplier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors (e.g. equipment technicians, cleaners) working near 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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Management in Butchery Areas	<p>operating saws, slicers and mincers without awareness of site-specific risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery drivers and suppliers entering processing areas without controlled access or induction • Inconsistent safety standards between host employer and contractors performing maintenance on butchery equipment 		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
14. Documentation, Record Keeping and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdated or missing procedures for operation, cleaning and maintenance of butchery equipment • Incomplete records of training, competency assessments, inspections and maintenance for critical plant • Failure to analyse incidents and near misses to identify systemic butchery safety issues • Non-conformance with and regulatory documentation requirements under WHS Act 2011 and associated Regulations 	3L	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

Queensland & Australian Capital Territory

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Victoria

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

New South Wales

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

Western Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2020
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Safe Work Australia Links

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

South Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

Model Codes of Practice

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

Tasmania

Work Health and Safety Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.