

Chain Saw

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:	



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 before task starts. 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. Governance, WHS Duties and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear organisational policy for chainsaw selection, use and management leading to inconsistent practices and higher risk tolerance Failure by Officers and PCBUs to exercise due diligence in relation to chainsaw risks under WHS Act 2011 (e.g. no systematic review of risk controls, no resourcing) Poor consultation with workers and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) regarding chainsaw hazards, near misses and control effectiveness Inadequate incident, near miss and hazard reporting system for chainsaw-related events resulting in repeat failures No formal process to review chainsaw risk assessments following incidents, changes in equipment or changes in work methods (e.g. new habitat construction techniques) Insufficient integration of chainsaw risk controls into broader WHS management system, resulting in conflicting instructions or gaps Contractor and volunteer activities involving chainsaws not covered by organisation's WHS governance arrangements Failure to consider specific risks from electrical and hydraulic chainsaws in existing generic chainsaw procedures 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop, approve and implement an organisation-wide Chainsaw Management Policy that applies to petrol, electrical and hydraulic chainsaws and explicitly references WHS Act 2011 duties Define clear roles and responsibilities for PCBUs, Officers, line managers, supervisors, team leaders, workers, volunteers and contractors in relation to chainsaw risk management and authorisation Establish formal consultation arrangements with workers and HSRs on chainsaw matters including toolbox talks, safety committee meetings and structured reviews of chainsaw incidents and lessons learned Implement a standardised chainsaw near incident, near miss and hazard reporting category within the organisation's WHS reporting system, ensuring simple access via app or intranet Require documented chainsaw risk assessments to be reviewed at defined intervals (at least annually) and when there is a change in equipment type, work environment or habitat construction methods Integrate all chainsaw procedures and controls into the overarching WHS Management System (e.g. references in permit safety standards, isolation procedures, electrical safety procedures and permit systems) Include chainsaw-related WHS performance indicators (e.g. training completion, inspection compliance, incident trends) in management WHS reports and Officer due diligence reviews Extend organisational WHS governance arrangements (policies, procedures, supervision and monitoring) to contractors and volunteers using chainsaws, with clear expectations in contracts or service agreements Ensure chainsaw-related documents (policies, procedures, risk assessments, training materials) explicitly differentiate requirements for electrical, hydraulic and petrol chainsaws where control measures differ Schedule periodic independent reviews or audits of the chainsaw management system by an internal WHS advisor or external specialist to test compliance and effectiveness 	Medium
2. Procurement and Selection of Chainsaws and Accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of chainsaws that are not fit for purpose (e.g. inappropriate bar length, power rating, or duty cycle for habitat construction and field conditions) Procurement of chainsaws without mandatory Australian Standards compliance, safety features or guarding (e.g. chain brake, front and rear hand guard, chain catcher, trigger lockout) 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a documented chainsaw procurement standard that specifies minimum design and safety requirements in line with relevant Australian Standards and manufacturer instructions for electrical and hydraulic models Require pre-purchase risk and suitability assessment for any new chainsaw type, including consultation with end users, WHS advisors and maintenance personnel Mandate integrated safety features for all chainsaws including functioning chain brake, throttle lockout, chain catcher, anti-vibration mounts, front and rear hand guards and low-kickback chains where practicable 	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate consideration of electrical safety requirements when procuring electrical chainsaws, extension leads and Residual Current Devices (RCDs) Procurement of hydraulic chainsaws without appropriate hose burst protection, quick-connect safety fittings and pressure ratings compatible with host plant Inconsistent or informal purchase of chainsaw chains, bars and accessories leading to mismatched or incompatible components that increase kickback risk Failure to consider vibration, noise, weight and ergonomic design during selection, contributing to musculoskeletal disorders and fatigue Inadequate selection of specialised chains or devices for habitat construction tasks (e.g. cutting close to ground, awkward angles, overhead or near fauna structures) Lack of standardisation across the fleet leading to multiple brands and models, more complex training, maintenance and parts management 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include specific requirements for electrical chainsaws such as double insulation, compatibility with RCD-protected circuits, appropriate ingress protection (IP) rating for outdoor work and cable strain relief Specify requirements for hydraulic chainsaws including rated hoses, non-drip quick couplings, hose guards, burst protection and compatibility with most hydraulic power unit's pressure and flow Standardise brands and models where practicable to simplify training, spare parts inventory and maintenance procedures Establish approved lists of chains, bars, files and lubrication products for each chainsaw model, ensuring compatibility and reduced kickback potential Incorporate ergonomic considerations into procurement decisions (weight, balance, handle design, anti-vibration performance, etc.) to manage long-term health risks Require supplier documentation, conformity statements and training materials to be supplied at purchase and stored in central plant register Prohibit purchase of second-hand chainsaws unless they undergo a formal pre-acceptance inspection against the procurement standard and manufacturer specifications 	
3. Plant Registration, Asset Management and Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No central inventory of chainsaws (electrical, hydraulic and petrol) leading to uncontrolled plant in the workplace Missing or inaccessible manufacturer manuals for specific chainsaw models, resulting in unsafe set-up, use or chain replacement practices Failure to record safety-critical specifications such as maximum bar length, chain type, operating voltage or hydraulic pressure and flow ratings Inadequate tracking of ownership, location and status of chainsaws (e.g. units in service, out-of-service, awaiting repair, disposed) Lack of documented history of repairs, modifications or component upgrades 	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and maintain a centralised plant and asset register for all chainsaws, including electrical and hydraulic units, recording unique ID, model, serial number, location and responsible manager Store digital copies of all manufacturer manuals, safety bulletins and technical data sheets in a shared document management system accessible to workers and maintenance personnel Record key safety specifications in the asset register (bar length limits, chain type and pitch, electrical ratings, hydraulic pressure and flow requirements, compatible accessories) Implement a status tracking system (e.g. colour tags, barcoded plant ID, or CMMS flags) indicating whether a chainsaw is in service, out-of-service, under repair or retired Document all repairs, component replacements and authorised modifications in maintenance records, including who performed the work and what standards or manuals were followed Prohibit non-approved modifications to chainsaws and their power supplies; require engineering or manufacturer approval for any changes that may affect safety features or performance Link chainsaw asset records to associated risk assessments, maintenance schedules, inspection checklists and training requirements within the WHS or plant management system 	Low

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5. Chainsaw Authorisation, Supervision and Access Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unrestricted access to chainsaws by untrained or unauthorised workers, volunteers or visitors • Inadequate supervision of new or inexperienced operators when using electrical or hydraulic chainsaws in complex environments (e.g. habitat construction zones, steep terrain, near live vegetation) • No formal process for granting or revoking chainsaw operating authority following training, competency assessment or incidents • Use of organisation-owned chainsaws by subcontractors without clear agreements about responsibilities, inspection and maintenance • Workers operating chainsaws while fatigued, affected by drugs or alcohol, or medically unfit, due to lack of fitness for work controls • No defined limits on solo work with chainsaws, including remote or isolated work scenarios, increasing response time in the event of a backback or laceration injuries 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
6. Safe Work Procedures and Work Planning (including Habitat Construction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of formal work procedures for electrical and hydraulic chainsaws leading to inconsistent practices across teams and locations • Procedures focusing only on conventional cutting (e.g. felling or cross-cutting) and not addressing specialist tasks such as habitat construction, pruning for habitat features or cutting near existing fauna structures • Inadequate integration of chainsaw hazards into pre-start risk assessments and planning (e.g. selection of appropriate equipment for the environment, weather and terrain) • Lack of specific guidance on manipulation of chainsaws in constrained or awkward positions during 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<p>habitat construction (e.g. overhead, around habitat hollows or artificial structures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to consider interaction risks with other plant (e.g. elevated work platforms, loaders, hydraulic power units) during chainsaw work • Safe work documentation not differentiating between control requirements for electrical vs hydraulic chainsaws, particularly regarding isolation, cable/hose management and electrical shock risk 		[REDACTED]	
7. Kickback Risk Management and Chainsaw Handling Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate organisational controls to manage kickback risk during general cutting and specialised habitat construction tasks • Lack of formal guidance on correct grip, stance and positioning to manage kickback forces, particularly for overhead or awkward cuts • Selection and use of inappropriate bars and chains that increase kickback likelihood (e.g. aggressive full chisel chains used in high risk environments without controls) • Poor systems for monitoring chain condition (dull, damaged teeth, incorrect depth gauge setting) resulting in greater kickback potential • Insufficient consideration of kickback in work planning, leading to cutting in positions where the operator or others are within the kickback arc • Inconsistent communication and signage about exclusion zones around chainsaw operators during higher-risk cuts 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
8. Electrical Safety Management for Electric Chainsaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of electric shock or electrocution from damaged cords, plugs or unprotected power sources feeding electrical chainsaws 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of non-RCD-protected outlets or inappropriate extension leads in outdoor or damp habitat construction environments • Inadequate cable management leading to cords being cut by the chainsaw, creating live exposed conductors or trip hazards • Use of electrical chainsaws in wet conditions without appropriate IP rating or controls • Lack of integration between electrical chainsaw use and the organisation's electrical safety, lock-out/tag-out and test and tag systems • Insufficient worker understanding of residual electrical dangers after tripping RCDs or breakers 		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
9. Hydraulic Power Systems for Hydraulic Chainsaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hydraulic hose failure resulting in injection injury, oil spray or fire hazard when operating hydraulic chainsaws • Incorrect connection of hoses (wrong ports, mismatched couplings, damaged seals) leading to uncontrolled movement or loss of control of the chainsaw • Hydraulic power units not maintained or inspected, causing pressure surges, overheating or failure during chainsaw use • Inadequate consideration of hydraulic hose routing during work, leading to trip hazards or entanglement with other plant or vegetation • No system for verifying compatibility of hydraulic chainsaws with host machines (e.g. pressure, flow, oil type) • Lack of specialised training and procedures for hydraulic injection risks 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	and the requirement for urgent medical response		[REDACTED]	
10. Maintenance, Inspection and Chain Replacement Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate preventative maintenance program for chainsaws leading to failures of chain brakes, throttles, guards, electrical insulation or hydraulic components No standard pre-start and post-use inspection routines, resulting in use of chainsaws with worn bars, loose fasteners, damaged guards or ineffective chain tensioning systems Unsystematic approach to chainsaw chain replacement and sharpening increasing the risk of kickback, chain breakage or poor cutting performance Maintenance and chain changes conducted without proper isolation of electrical or hydraulic power sources Use of non-genuine or incompatible chains, bars or sprockets or other manufacturer specifications Lack of competency in in-house maintenance personnel or external repairers performing safety critical work 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
11. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistent provision and enforcement of PPE requirements for chainsaw work, including eye, face, hearing, hand, leg and foot protection Use of PPE that is unsuitable for electrical or hydraulic chainsaw tasks (e.g. non-dielectric gloves near electrical hazards, degraded cut-resistant chaps) Failure to manage PPE lifecycle (inspection, cleaning, replacement), leading to reliance on worn or damaged 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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	<p>PPE that no longer offers rated protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient PPE stock at remote or field locations where chainsaw work, including habitat construction, is undertaken • Lack of training on limitations of PPE and over-reliance on PPE in lieu of higher-order controls 		[REDACTED]	
12. Environmental, Wildlife and Habitat Construction Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chainsaw work for habitat construction creating unplanned risks to wildlife, existing habitat features or protected vegetation due to inadequate ecological planning • Noise, vibration and exhaust (where applicable) from chainsaws disturbing fauna or breaching environmental approval conditions • Working in uneven, vegetated or unstable terrain without systematic assessment, increasing likelihood of slips, trips, falls and loss of control of the chainsaw • Lack of coordination between ecological specialists and chainsaw operators when designing and constructing habitat structures • Inadequate consideration of human interface risks when performing habitat construction in parks, reserves or urban areas 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
13. Remote and Isolated Work, Emergency Preparedness and First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chainsaw operators working alone or in remote areas without effective communication or emergency response arrangements • Delayed response to serious kickback or laceration injuries due to poor location information or lack of first response capability on site • Insufficient availability of first aid equipment suitable for chainsaw injuries 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<p>(e.g. trauma dressings, tourniquets) at work locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers and supervisors not trained in emergency procedures specific to chainsaw incidents, electrical shock or hydraulic injection No formal process for reviewing emergency responses after chainsaw incidents and implementing lessons learnt 		[REDACTED]	
14. Contractor, Labour Hire and Volunteer Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chainsaw work being carried out by contractors, labour hire workers or volunteers under differing standards and procedures from the host organisation Inadequate verification of contractor training, competency and equipment condition for electrical and hydraulic chainsaws Unclear allocation of WHS responsibilities for chainsaw maintenance, inspection and incident reporting between host organisation and contractors Volunteers undertaking host construction chainsaw work without comparable oversight, supervision and PPE provision Lack of integration of contractor and volunteer chainsaw work into the organisation's overall risk assessment and WHS performance monitoring 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
15. Monitoring, Audit, Review and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to systematically monitor chainsaw-related risks, leading to gradual degradation of controls and normalisation of deviance Inadequate auditing of chainsaw procedures, maintenance records and training compliance 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of meaningful analysis of chainsaw incidents and near misses, resulting in repeated similar events No formal mechanism to capture and integrate technological improvements (e.g. improved electric chainsaws, anti-kickback devices) into the organisation's plant strategy Static risk assessments that are not updated to reflect changes in work methods, habitat construction techniques, regulations or industry good practice 		<div style="background-color: black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div>	

SAMPLE

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-of-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.