

French Polishing

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 WHS roles, responsibilities and accountability for French polishing activities under the WHS Act 2011 Inadequate consultation with workers and health and safety representatives about chemical, fire and health risks Absence of a documented WHS management plan specific to fine finishing and French polishing processes Failure to consider WHS risk in business decisions (e.g. new products, new premises, new equipment) Poor integration of WHS with quality and production targets leading to commercial pressure to bypass controls 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define and document WHS responsibilities for CEOs, officers, managers and supervisors in relation to French polishing, referencing WHS Act 2011 duties Establish formal consultation arrangements (e.g. HSR, WHS committee, toolbox talks) that specifically address surface finishing risks (flammable solvents, fumes, manual handling, noise, dust) Develop, approve and periodically review a French polishing WHS management plan that aligns with the organisation's overall WHS management system Integrate WHS risk considerations into procurement, scheduling and project planning processes so that time and budget are allocated for safe polishing methods and controls Include WHS performance indicators for French polishing (e.g. incident rates, near misses, exposure monitoring results, training completion) in senior management reporting Undertake regular officer due diligence reviews to verify that adequate resources, systems and monitoring are in place for French polishing operations 	Medium
2. Procurement of Products, Equipment and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase of flammable, high-VOC shellac solutions, thinners and solvents without considering lower-risk alternatives Acquisition of polishing rubbers, pads, rags and cleaning materials that increase fire load and spontaneous combustion risk Procurement of machinery, lighting and power tools that are not appropriate for use in areas with flammable vapour Inadequate review of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for new polishes, stains or solvents prior to use Use of contractors or labour-hire workers for French polishing without verifying their WHS systems and competencies 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal procurement procedure that requires WHS risk evaluation of all French polishing products and equipment, giving preference to low-toxicity, low-VOC and less flammable options where reasonably practicable Require current Australian-compliant SDS for all finishing products prior to purchase and ensure they are reviewed by a competent person before approval Specify that electrical equipment, extraction systems and lighting for use near flammable vapours must comply with relevant Australian Standards and be suitable for the hazardous area classification where applicable Include WHS performance and French polishing competencies as selection criteria in contracts with suppliers, subcontractors and labour-hire providers Establish a preferred products list for polishes, solvents and cleaning agents that have been risk-assessed and approved by WHS and technical staff Periodically review procurement decisions to incorporate new, safer technologies (e.g. water-based sealers, low-flammability spirits, improved ventilation systems) 	Medium
3. Chemical Hazard Management (Shellac, Solvents and Cleaners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inhalation of solvent vapours (e.g. methylated spirits, alcohols, thinners) leading to acute and chronic health effects Skin contact with resins, solvents and cleaning agents causing dermatitis or sensitisation 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a chemical register and up-to-date SDS for all French polishing and cleaning products, accessible to workers and HSRs Conduct documented hazardous chemicals risk assessments for French polishing products, considering frequency, duration and method of use 	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ingestion risks from poor hygiene practices and decanting chemicals into unlabelled containers Use of incompatible cleaning agents creating hazardous atmospheres Inadequate control of cumulative exposure in small or enclosed work areas during extended polishing sessions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify engineering controls (e.g. local exhaust ventilation, appropriate general ventilation, fume extraction for benches) in WHS procedures and verify performance via periodic testing Implement administrative controls such as limiting time spent in high-exposure tasks, job rotation and clear rules for use of chemicals only in designated, ventilated areas Provide and enforce appropriate PPE specified via a risk assessment (e.g. chemical-resistant gloves, safety eyewear, suitable respiratory protection where required) with fit-testing and training Prohibit decanting chemicals into unlabelled or inappropriate containers and mandate compliant workplace labelling in accordance with WHS Regulation requirements Establish hygiene and housekeeping rules (no eating or drinking in work areas, hand-washing facilities, regular cleaning of surfaces) supported by supervision and periodic audits Arrange health surveillance or exposure monitoring if required by SDS or where risk assessment identifies a potential for significant exposure 	
4. Fire and Explosion Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storage and use of flammable liquids and alcohol-based polishes creating vapour ignition risk Soiled rags, pads and polishing rubbers saturated with solvent, leading to spontaneous combustion or fire spread Ignition sources from electrical equipment, static electricity, smoking or hot work in or near polishing areas Insufficient segregation of Fire polishing activities from other operations (e.g. welding, grinding, spray painting) Inadequate emergency preparedness, fire detection and fire-fighting equipment for finishing areas 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium
5. Work Environment, Ventilation and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor general ventilation leading to build-up of solvent vapours and dust from surface preparation 	High		Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate lighting increasing the risk of errors, spills and contact with moving parts or sharp edges Crowded or poorly laid-out workspaces increasing trip, collision and manual handling risks Insufficient amenities and washing facilities undermining hygiene and increasing skin and ingestion exposure to chemicals Noise from associated woodworking or preparation equipment contributing to hearing damage or communication issues in emergencies 		<p>[REDACTED]</p>	
6. Training, Competency and Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers performing fine finishing without adequate understanding of chemical, fire and ergonomic risks Inconsistent technique, overuse of solvents, increased vapour generation and repetitive strain Supervisors lacking knowledge of WHS obligations for hazardous chemicals and manual tasks in fine finishing work New or young workers being disproportionately exposed due to inadequate induction and mentoring 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <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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7. Procedures, Work Instructions and Safe Systems of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of documented procedures for French polishing leading to ad-hoc practices and uncontrolled variation in technique Safe systems not reflecting the specific risks of the French polish technique (multiple thin coats, frequent rag use, repetitive motions) Outdated procedures not aligned with current legislation, SDS or equipment Overly complex or inaccessible procedures resulting in low compliance 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium
8. Manual Tasks, Ergonomics and Fatigue Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive hand and wrist movement and sustained grip during French polishing increasing risk of musculoskeletal disorders Awkward posture when working on large or intricate pieces involving bending, twisting and reaching Extended periods of standing at benches leading to fatigue and lower limb discomfort Commercial pressure and long shifts during peak production periods contributing to errors and injuries 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium
9. Plant, Equipment and Maintenance Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly maintained extraction and ventilation systems reducing control of vapours and dust Defective electrical equipment presenting shock or ignition hazards in areas where solvents are used 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled introduction of new tools, lamps or heating devices into French polishing areas Lack of guarding or interlocks on associated preparation equipment (e.g. sanding, cutting) used before polishing 		[REDACTED]	
10. Storage, Handling and Waste Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improper storage of polishes, solvents and stains increasing spill, fire and exposure risks Inadequate segregation of incompatible substances Uncontrolled accumulation of waste solvents, used containers and contaminated rags Environmental contamination from incorrect disposal of waste and sludge 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
11. Health Monitoring, Incident Management and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under-reporting of near misses, minor incidents and early symptoms of over-exposure or musculoskeletal strain Delayed recognition of health effects from chronic solvent exposure or repetitive tasks Inadequate first aid arrangements for chemical splashes, inhalation and minor burns Non-compliance with notifiable incident requirements under WHS legislation 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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			[REDACTED]	
12. Contractor, Visitor and Public Safety Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors undertaking French polishing or associated tasks without alignment to site WHS systems Visitors or clients entering areas where solvents, flammable liquids or fine finishing work are in use Off-site French polishing work in clients' premises where the environment is not directly controlled by the PCBU 	Medium	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	Low

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-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.