

Handling Venomous Snakes

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			<b>Elimination</b> Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	<b>Substitution</b> 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.	<b>Engineering</b> 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:	
<b>4A</b>	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.
<b>3H</b>	Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
<b>2M</b>	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
<b>1L</b>	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

  

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
<b>Catastrophic</b>	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
<b>Major</b>	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
<b>Moderate</b>	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
<b>Minor</b>	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
<b>Insignificant</b>	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, Legal Compliance and WHS Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of documented WHS governance structure for venomous snake operations leading to unclear health and safety accountability</li> <li>Failure to identify and comply with WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulation requirements relevant to handling venomous snakes (including hazard management and emergency preparedness)</li> <li>Inadequate consultation with workers and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) about snake-related risks and controls</li> <li>No formal process to review incidents, near misses, and regulatory updates related to venomous snake handling</li> <li>Insufficient due diligence by officers to ensure appropriate systems, resources and verification activities are in place</li> </ul>	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and document a WHS governance framework that explicitly includes venomous snake handling as a high-risk activity, with clear assignment of PCBU, officer, manager, supervisor and worker responsibilities</li> <li>Undertake and maintain a legal register identifying relevant WHS legislation, codes of practice, Australian Standards and industry guidelines applicable to venomous wildlife work, and integrate these into policies and procedures</li> <li>Develop a specific WHS policy for venomous snake work that outlines risk management expectations, competence requirements, consultation arrangements, incident reporting and stop-work authority</li> <li>Implement formal WHS consultation procedures ensuring workers and HSRs are involved in the development, implementation and review of venomous snake safety systems of work</li> <li>Require officers to fulfil WHS due diligence obligations through regular reporting on snake-related risk controls, resources, training compliance and audit findings</li> <li>Schedule periodic senior management reviews (e.g. annually or after serious incidents) of the venomous snake handling risk profile, controls effectiveness and required improvements</li> <li>Maintain documented risk assessments for venomous snake handling activities and ensure they are reviewed at defined intervals and following any significant change or incident</li> </ul>	High
2. Organisational Risk Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of a structured risk management process for venomous snake handling across locations and work types</li> <li>Inconsistent or informal identification, assessment and control of snake-related hazards</li> <li>No defined risk criteria or matrix for assessing risks associated with venomous bites, envenomation and public exposure</li> <li>Failure to consider reasonably foreseeable worst-case scenarios (e.g. multiple victims, remote locations, delayed ambulance response)</li> <li>Lack of integration of snake-related risks into broader organisational risk registers and business continuity planning</li> </ul>	Extreme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement an organisation-wide WHS risk management procedure aligned with WHS Regulation requirements and apply it specifically to venomous snake work</li> <li>Develop and consistently use a standardised risk matrix and risk criteria that explicitly consider the potential for fatal outcomes from snake envenomation</li> <li>Maintain a central risk register for venomous snake activities that captures hazards, controls, risk ratings, responsible persons and review dates</li> <li>Require formal risk assessments for new contracts, new sites, new species handled or significant procedural changes, including consultation with competent persons</li> <li>Incorporate scenario-based risk assessment (e.g. handler collapse while alone, vehicle breakdown with live snake on board, public crowding) into planning activities</li> <li>Link venomous snake risk controls into the organisation's emergency management, business continuity and contractor management systems</li> <li>Use a change management process to review snake-related risks whenever new equipment, techniques, pharmaceuticals (e.g. antivenom storage) or locations are introduced</li> </ul>	High
3. Competency, Training and Licensing Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate or inconsistent competence of handlers, assistants and supervisors</li> </ul>	Extreme		Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in venomous snake behaviour and safe handling principles</li> <li>Lack of formal training paths and assessment for venomous snake handling, restraint, transport and emergency response</li> <li>No verification of currency of licences, permits or authorisations required under wildlife, biosecurity or local regulations</li> <li>Overreliance on informal mentoring or past experience without documented competency assessment</li> <li>Insufficient training for non-handling staff (e.g. reception, field workers, security, maintenance) who may inadvertently encounter venomous snakes</li> <li>No refresher or scenario-based emergency training for response to bites, collapses or uncontrolled snake escapes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a competency framework for all roles involved in venomous snake operations (handlers, assistants, supervisors, drivers, call-takers, first aiders) specifying required knowledge, skills and experience</li> <li>Implement a formal training program that includes accredited or industry-recognised venomous snake handling courses, first aid for envenomation and CPR, with documented learning outcomes</li> <li>Introduce a competency-based assessment process (theory and practical) with sign-off by a suitably qualified, experienced and authorised assessor prior to independent work with venomous snakes</li> <li>Maintain a training and competency register that records qualifications, licences, permits, refresher training dates and any limitations on work scope for each worker</li> <li>Require periodic refresher training and reassessment (e.g. annually or as risk-based) for handling techniques, bite management, emergency communication protocols and use of PPE</li> <li>Provide targeted awareness training for all potentially exposed workers (e.g. grounds staff, administration, cleaners) on hazard recognition, reporting and exclusion procedures without handling</li> <li>Include assessment of psychological readiness, stress management and fitness for duty, with procedures to restrict work if a worker is impaired or fatigued</li> <li>Integrate training records and competency checks into onboarding, contractor engagement and performance review processes</li> </ul>	
4. Policies, Procedures and Safe Systems of Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of documented procedures for planning and authorising venomous snake work</li> <li>Inconsistent practices between handlers and sites leading to unsafe variability in controls</li> <li>No formal criteria for when venomous snake jobs can proceed, be modified or be refused on safety grounds</li> <li>Lack of documented exclusion zone, public interface and communication protocols during snake operations</li> <li>Insufficient procedural controls for working alone, after hours or in remote or poorly resourced locations</li> </ul>	Extreme	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	High

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			[REDACTED]	
5. Equipment, PPE and Antivenom Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate specification, procurement or maintenance of snake handling equipment (hooks, tongs, tubes, bags, containers)</li> <li>• Lack of a systematic inspection and replacement program for critical safety equipment</li> <li>• Insufficient or inappropriate PPE for venomous snake tasks (e.g. gaiters, gloves, boots, protective clothing, eye protection) due to cost or procurement failures</li> <li>• Poorly managed antivenom stocks, storage conditions or access arrangements where antivenom is held onsite</li> <li>• No standard equipment lists for vehicles or kits leading to missing or incompatible items at the point of need</li> </ul>	Extreme	[REDACTED]	Medium
6. Site, Client and Public Interface Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of pre-engagement screening of client sites and activities leading to uncontrolled public exposure to venomous snakes</li> <li>• Poor control of crowds or bystanders during snake capture or relocation operations</li> <li>• Conflicting instructions or unsafe demands from clients, event organisers or other PCBUs</li> </ul>	Extreme	[REDACTED]	High

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate arrangements for shared duties and cooperation where multiple PCBUs operate at the same location</li> <li>Insufficient communication of residual risks and behavioural expectations to clients after a snake has been removed or relocated</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
7. Journey, Transport and Storage Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal journey management planning for long-distance or remote area travel associated with snake call-outs</li> <li>Inadequate systems for safe containment of venomous snakes during transport resulting in escape risk within vehicles or at transfer points</li> <li>Insufficient controls for transporting snakes through or near public areas schools, shopping centres or hospitals</li> <li>Lack of structured vehicle maintenance, fit-out verification and inspection systems for snake operations</li> <li>Poorly controlled storage of venomous snakes at holding facilities, depots or temporary enclosures</li> </ul>	Extreme	[REDACTED]	High
8. Emergency Preparedness, First Aid and Medical Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of an organisational emergency response plan specifically addressing venomous snake bites, collapses and escapes</li> </ul>	Extreme	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate first aid and CPR competence among workers likely to be first on scene</li> <li>No formal liaison with local ambulance, hospitals and poisons information services about the organisation's venomous snake activities</li> <li>Failure to provide or maintain appropriate first aid equipment and communication tools at all likely work locations</li> <li>Poor post-incident support and return-to-work planning for workers affected by bites or traumatic events</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
9. Health Monitoring, Fitness for Work and Psychological Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No structured approach to health monitoring for workers regularly exposed to venomous snakes and related stressors</li> <li>Workers undertaking high-risk tasks while experiencing fatigue, illness, medication side-effects, substance use or psychological distress</li> <li>Lack of systems to identify, prevent and manage cumulative stress, anxiety or post-traumatic stress related to snake work</li> <li>Stigma or fear discouraging workers from reporting health or mental health concerns that may affect safe performance</li> <li>Absence of clear procedures for temporary restriction or modification of duties when fitness for work is in doubt</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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10. Incident Reporting, Investigation and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under-reporting of bites, near misses, equipment failures and unsafe conditions due to cultural or system barriers</li> <li>Superficial incident investigations that fail to identify root causes and systemic issues in venomous snake operations</li> <li>Lack of mechanisms to share lessons learnt across teams, regions and contractors</li> <li>No structured review of safety performance data to drive improvement initiatives</li> <li>Inadequate corrective action management leading to recurrence of similar incidents</li> </ul>	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>	Low
11. Contractor, Volunteer and Third-Party Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement of contractors, volunteers to assist with venomous snake work without verifying competence and WHS experience</li> <li>Inconsistent expectations and controls between in-house staff and external providers handling venomous snakes on behalf of the organisation</li> <li>No clear allocation of WHS duties and communication channels between PCBU's working together on snake-related tasks</li> <li>Limited oversight of contractor compliance with agreed procedures, PPE and emergency arrangements</li> <li>Use of informal helpers (e.g. landowners, security guards, event staff) during snake events without appropriate controls</li> </ul>	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>	Medium

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			[REDACTED]	
12. Documentation, Records and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical information about venomous snake risks, incidents and controls not recorded or easily retrievable</li> <li>• Outdated or conflicting procedures and guidance documents in circulation</li> <li>• Inadequate record keeping for training, competency, equipment inspections and health monitoring</li> <li>• Loss of key knowledge when experienced handlers or managers leave the organisation</li> <li>• Insufficient access to current snake identification and envenomation management information for workers in the field</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED] [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.