

Plumbing Trenching and Drainage

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																									
Risk Rating & Required Action: <table border="1"> <tr> <td>4A</td> <td>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.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3H</td> <td>Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2M</td> <td>Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1L</td> <td>Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.</td> </tr> </table>								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.	Notes on Hierarchy of Controls: Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Eliminate 2. Substitute 3. Isolate 4. Engineering 5. Administrative 6. PPE 																	
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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, Duties and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear WHS roles, responsibilities and accountability for plumbing trenching and drainage activities Failure to demonstrate due diligence by officers under WHS Act 2011 (no active verification of WHS systems) Inadequate worker consultation, HSR involvement and issue-resolution processes for drainage and trenching risks No structured process to review WHS performance for high-risk construction work such as trenches deeper than 1.5 m Poor integration of principal contractor WHS requirements with plumbing contractor systems on multi-employer sites Inadequate systems to manage health and safety duties for subcontractors, labour hire and apprentices 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a documented WHS governance framework that allocates clear PCBU, officer, manager and supervisor duties for plumbing drainage and trenching work, referencing WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulation requirements Implement an officer due-diligence program including regular WHS reviews, site walks, audit schedules, WHS performance reporting) with specific focus on excavation, confined and restricted spaces, and contaminated water systems Formalise a WHS consultation procedure including toolbox talks, pre-start meetings and HSR engagement, ensuring drainage specific risks (e.g. basement flooding, sewage pumping, septic servicing) are routinely discussed Include trenching and drainage WHS performance indicators (e.g. inspection completion rates, corrective action close-out times) in management review meetings and board reporting Develop and enforce a WHS engagement protocol for coordinating duty holders (principal contractor, plumbing contractor, civil contractor, pump suppliers) including agreed rules for trench access, isolation and backfilling Maintain documented WHS responsibilities in position descriptions, contracts and subcontractor agreements, including explicit expectations around compliance with high-risk construction work requirements Implement a formal WHS issue-resolution and escalation process so that trench stability, flooding and contamination concerns are addressed promptly and recorded 	3H
2. Planning, Design and Safe Work Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate pre-construction planning for below-ground drainage, leading to unplanned trench depths, unexcavated excavations and flooding risks Drainage and sewer design not considering constructability, access, maintenance and safe inspection (e.g. borescope, CCTV, stormwater pit inspections) No formal risk assessment for basement flooding during drainage works, sewage rerouting or dirty water pumping operations Failure to identify interaction between trenching, existing structures, underground services, traffic and adjacent works Lack of planning for greywater systems, backflow prevention devices 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require a formal WHS design and planning review for all plumbing trenching and drainage projects, including constructability, staging, temporary works and flooding scenarios Integrate WHS risk assessments into design documentation for sewer drains, sanitary plumbing stackwork, sub-surface drainage, deep pits and grease arrestors, with design sign-off including safety in design statements Mandate project-specific high-level WHS risk assessments for basement flooding, dirty water pumping, sewage rerouting and septic system servicing, including contingency and emergency pumping plans Include a requirement that designers and engineers identify and document safe access points for inspection, maintenance and borescope/CCTV work, and avoid unnecessary entry into pits and confined areas Develop standard design criteria to prevent backflow and cross-contamination in greywater and sanitary systems, including requirements for certified backflow prevention devices and isolation arrangements Embed a planning process that maps underground services (DBYD, utility records, site-specific surveys) and incorporates them into trench alignment and depth decisions Include in construction programs dedicated time and resources for trench safety setup, inspections and progressive backfilling, so WHS controls are not compromised by schedule pressure 	3H

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	<p>and grease arrestors regarding overflows and contamination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate planning for safe access to deep pits, shallow stormwater pits and septic tanks for inspection and maintenance 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure SWMS development is triggered through the planning phase for all high-risk construction work, and that SWMS are informed by this higher-level risk assessment 	
3. Competency, Licensing and Training Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plumbers and workers undertaking trenching, drainage installation and sewage pumping without appropriate licences or tickets Inadequate training in trenching hazards, ground conditions, sloping and shoring principles and flooding risks Lack of competency in use of borescopes, cameras, leak detection and sub-surface leakage detection equipment Insufficient training on working around septic systems, greywater, contaminated water and biological hazards No structured induction for new workers and subcontractors on project-specific drainage trenching risks Fatigue and cognitive overload due to long hours or rushed work leading to poor decision-making Supervisors not trained to recognise early signs of trench instability, undermining or water ingress 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a competency management system that records and verifies trade licences, plant tickets and relevant high-risk work licences for all personnel involved in trenching and drainage tasks Develop a mandatory training program on excavation safety, trench collapse mechanisms, water and soil behaviour, and basement flooding scenarios for supervisors and workers Provide specific training and competency assessment in the safe system of work for borescope usage, CCTV drain inspection, sub-surface leakage detection and associated electrical and trip hazards Deliver infection control and hazardous substances training addressing sewage, septic systems, greywater/dirty water pumping, and the health risks of exposure to contaminated water and aerosols Mandatory project-specific WHS inductions that cover trench layouts, known services, emergency egress routes, pump locations, stormwater pits and restricted zones Train supervisors in hazard recognition for trench instability (cracking, slumping, water seepage), pump failure indications and safe evacuation triggers Include fatigue management, work/rest guidance and escalation procedures in training for teams working on extended drainage outages or time-critical sewage rerouting Conduct periodic refresher training and verifications of competency, with records retained and audited 	2M
4. Contractor, Labour Hire and Supply Chain Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of subcontractors or labour hire without adequate WHS systems for trenching and drainage Poor vetting of pump suppliers, vacuum truck operators and CCTV inspection contractors regarding safety practices Inconsistent standards between contractors working in the same trench or drainage system, causing confusion 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply delays or substitutions leading to use of unsuitable shoring, pumps, backflow prevention devices or pipework Lack of clear WHS expectations in contracts for servicing septic systems and sewage pump installations No system to ensure third-party service providers follow site emergency and flooding procedures 		[REDACTED]	
5. Excavation, Trenching and Ground Stability Management System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a formal excavation and trenching procedure covering all depths, soil types and support systems Inadequate assessment of geotechnical conditions, including water table, fill material and proximity to structures Uncontrolled deep trenching for sewer reroutes, sanitary sewer connections and sub-surface drainage installation Failure to manage underground structures, basements, retaining walls, shallow stormwater pits and utilities No system to manage trenching, backfilling, benching or shoring removal linked to inspections Inadequate controls for plant operating adjacent to trench edges causing surcharge loads and collapse 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
6. Basement Flooding, Water Ingress and Pumping Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate assessment of flooding risk during basement drainage works and rerouting of sewage lines Over-reliance on single dirty water or sewage pump with no redundancy or alarm system 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure of temporary bypass pumping for sewer drain installation or septic system servicing leading to overflows • Uncontrolled stormwater entering open trenches, stormwater pits or basements during rain events • Improper setup of greywater systems, backflow prevention devices and drainage for bathtubs and sinks, leading to backflow and internal flooding • Inadequate planning for power supply to pumps, including generator backup and RCD protection 		[REDACTED]	
7. Underground Services and Utility Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to underground electrical, gas, water, communications or existing sewer/stormwater assets during trenching • Inadequate use of DBYD and site-specific service locating prior to excavation • Poor coordination with asset owners and facility managers where existing services cross new drainage alignments • Inaccurate or outdated as-built drawings leading to unexpected services in trenches for drainage installation • No process for suspending work and reassessing when unknown services are discovered • Lack of clear responsibility for service isolation and lock-out arrangements before cutting into live drains or stacks 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
8. Confined and Restricted Space, Pits and Chambers Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers entering deep pits, septic tanks, grease arrestors or manholes without confined space assessment • No formal determination of confined vs restricted space for stormwater pits, sewage pump chambers and basement sumps 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate atmospheric testing, ventilation and rescue capability for entry into chambers for inspection or maintenance Reliance on informal access (e.g. removing pit lids) without barriers, permits or supervision Borescope and CCTV inspection conducted from unsafe positions adjacent to open pits or floor openings No system for fall protection around open pits, chambers and basement drainage sumps 		[REDACTED]	
9. Plant, Equipment and Technology Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of unsuitable or poorly maintained excavation, pumping and inspection equipment for drainage works Failure of dirty water pumps, sewage pumps and greywater systems due to inadequate maintenance programs Uncalibrated or unreliable leak detection and sub-surface leakage detection devices giving false results Inadequate management of portable electrical equipment used for borescopes, cameras and pumps in wet areas No standardisation of trench support systems leading to mismatched components and improper installation Lack of system to track inspection, testing and tagging records for plant and equipment used in basements and trenches 	4H	[REDACTED]	2M
10. Health Hazards, Biological and Chemical Exposure Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to sewage, septic effluent, greywater and contaminated water aerosols during drainage and septic system work Inadequate infection control systems for workers servicing septic systems, sewage pumps and blocked sewer drains 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of procedures for managing hazardous substances associated with drain cleaning and root clearing (e.g. chemical root inhibitors, cleaning agents) No system for vaccination, health monitoring or post-exposure management for workers frequently exposed to sewage Poor hygiene facilities and decontamination arrangements at sites with significant contaminated water activities Improper management of waste removed from drains, grease arrestors and septic systems, leading to secondary contamination risks 		[REDACTED]	
11. Traffic, Public Interface and Site Security around Trenches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled public or non-authorized worker access to open trenches, pits and drainage works Inadequate traffic management around roadside or car park drainage, stormwater pits and sewer installations Poor lighting and signage at night or in basement car park leading to falls into open pits or trenches Insecure storage of pumps, hoses and drainage equipment creating trip hazards and unauthorized access Insufficient coordination with building occupants during internal drain setup for bathtubs, sinks and sanitary stackwork Failure to secure open floor penetrations and temporary drain openings in occupied buildings 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
12. Environmental and Wastewater Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled discharge of sediment-laden water, sewage or greywater during trench dewatering or bypass pumping 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate management of leaks and overflows from temporary drainage setups or testing of new lines No system for managing tree roots removed from blocked pipes, leading to inappropriate disposal and contamination Poor control of noise and odour from pumping, septic servicing and grease arrester cleaning affecting neighbours and occupants Failure to comply with environmental licence or council requirements for discharge from basement sumps and greywater systems 		[REDACTED]	
13. Documentation, Records and Information Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical WHS information for trenching and drainage not documented or readily accessible on site Loss of inspection records for trenches, pits, shoring, pumps and confined spaces, leading to repeated errors Inadequate control of permits, design drawings and temporary works designs for drainage projects No systematic recording of incidents, near misses or flooding events for trend analysis and learning Poor version control leading to use of outdated procedures or designs on site Failure to keep maintenance, testing and tagging records for pumps, electrical equipment and leak detection devices 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
14. Monitoring, Inspection, Audit and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Irregular or ineffective inspections of trenches, pits, drainage installations and pumps Failure to identify deteriorating conditions such as ground movement, water ingress or pump degradation Inspection findings not acted upon, leading to repeat hazards and incidents 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of WHS controls in plumbing drainage operations No structured mechanism to incorporate lessons learned from incidents, audits and industry guidance 		[REDACTED]	
15. Emergency Preparedness and Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific emergency plans for trench collapse, basement flooding, pump failure or sewage overflow Workers unaware of emergency roles, communication protocols and assembly points for below-ground incidents Inadequate rescue equipment and arrangements for confined or restricted spaces associated with drainage works Delayed emergency response due to poor site access, unclear addressing or lack of coordination with emergency services No debrief and improvement processes following significant flooding or collapse events 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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.