

Post Hole Auger

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			<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.	<b>Administrative</b> Change	
								<b>PPE</b>	

  

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, Legislative Compliance and WHS Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of documented WHS management system specific to powered post hole augers leading to unmanaged risks</li> <li>Failure to align controls with WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulations (e.g. plant management, consultation, information, training and instruction)</li> <li>Unclear PCBU, officer and worker responsibilities for safe use of motorised augers and post hole diggers</li> <li>Inadequate consultation with workers and health and safety representatives about auger-related risks and controls</li> <li>No formal process to review WHS performance data (incidents, near misses, inspections) relating to auger operations</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish and maintain a WHS management system that explicitly includes powered post hole augers as plant, referencing WHS Act 2011 and applicable WHS Regulations and Codes of Practice (e.g. Managing Risks of Plant in the Workplace)</li> <li>Define and document PCBU, officer and worker duties in relation to selection, use, maintenance and supervision of augers and post hole diggers, and communicate these responsibilities during inductions and toolbox talks</li> <li>Implement a formal consultation process (e.g. WHS committee, HSR forums, toolbox meetings) that routinely covers plant risks including augers and encourages reporting of hazards and improvement ideas</li> <li>Develop a written auger and post hole digging risk management procedure that links to the organisation's overall risk management framework (identification, assessment, control, review) and is authorised by officers or senior management</li> <li>Ensure officers exercise due diligence by periodically reviewing auger-related risk assessments, incident trends and audit findings, and allocating adequate resources for training, guarding, maintenance and supervision</li> <li>Schedule periodic internal audits and management reviews focused on plant risk management and compliance with the WHS Act 2011, with specific checks for motorised auger controls</li> <li>Maintain a register of legislative and standards requirements relevant to augers (e.g. plant regulations, vibration, noise, hazardous manual tasks) and assign responsibility for monitoring changes and updating procedures</li> </ul>	Medium
2. Procurement, Plant Selection and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase of auger or post hole diggers that are not fit-for-purpose for Australian conditions or site-specific soil types and terrain</li> <li>Acquisition of plant without compliance with guarding, emergency stop features, or adequate vibration and noise controls</li> <li>Reliance on imported equipment lacking Australian documentation, safety labelling or instructions in clear English</li> <li>Failure to consider compatibility between auger units and carriers (e.g. skid steer, tractor, handheld units) leading to mechanical or stability risks</li> <li>Procurement decisions based primarily on price, with no structured safety-in-design assessment</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a formal plant procurement policy requiring pre-purchase WHS review for all augers and post hole diggers, considering safety features, ergonomics, vibration, guarding, noise, and suitability for intended use</li> <li>Specify minimum safety requirements in purchase documents (e.g. compliant guarding around rotating components, dead-man controls, emergency stop, clear depth and capacity ratings, anti-kickback features where available)</li> <li>Require manufacturers' and suppliers' information in English, including operating manuals, maintenance schedules, safe use limitations, and evidence of conformity with relevant Australian Standards where applicable</li> <li>Include WHS personnel and experienced operators in the procurement evaluation process to assess practical safety, handling characteristics and potential misuse scenarios</li> <li>Standardise brands and models where practicable to simplify training, spare parts, maintenance systems and competency development</li> <li>Ensure procurement documentation requires delivery of all safety decals, tags and risk information with the plant, and prohibits removal of safety labels</li> <li>Undertake a safety-in-design review for new or significantly different auger systems (e.g. large tractor-mounted units) to assess stability, guarding, access/egress and transport requirements prior to approval for use</li> </ul>	Medium

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3. Plant Registration, Documentation and Risk Assessment System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Augers not included in the organisation's plant and equipment register, leading to missed inspections and uncontrolled use</li> <li>• Absence of a formal risk assessment process specific to powered augers and post hole diggers</li> <li>• Inadequate or outdated plant operating manuals and technical documentation</li> <li>• No systematic review of new tasks or locations where augers will be used (e.g. near underground services, on slopes, in remote areas)</li> <li>• Failure to document and communicate specific exclusion zones, underground service controls and local site rules</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include all augers and post hole diggers (handheld and machine-mounted) in a centralised plant and equipment register with unique identification, location, owner, and maintenance status</li> <li>• Implement a mandatory formal WHS risk assessment process for augers covering typical tasks such as post hole excavation, fence line work, retaining walls and footing piers, with periodic review and when conditions or equipment change</li> <li>• Ensure current manufacturer manuals and safety data are stored in an accessible document control system and referenced in risk assessments and procedures</li> <li>• Develop a standard auger job planning checklist template that addresses soil conditions, ground stability, underground overhead services, proximity to traffic, weather, and access for emergency response</li> <li>• Document standard exclusion zones for operating augers and post hole diggers and include them in site WHS plans, induction and signage requirements</li> <li>• Integrate auger controls into project WHS plans and safe systems of work (e.g. construction WHS management plans, rural property safety plans) rather than relying on ad hoc verbal instructions</li> </ul>	Medium
4. Training, Competency and Authorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate training in the hazards of rotating plant, entanglement and kickback associated with augers and post hole diggers</li> <li>• Operators and offsideers using augers without verification of competency or understanding of site specific controls</li> <li>• No structured program for refresher training or re-assessment following incidents or changes to equipment</li> <li>• Lack of instruction for workers on recognising unsuitable ground conditions, excessive slope, or environmental conditions such as high winds and heat</li> <li>• Insufficient training for supervisors on their responsibilities for monitoring auger use and enforcing safe systems of work</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
5. Safe Work Procedures, Permits and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of formal safe work procedures for use of motorised augers and post hole diggers in different environments (rural, residential, construction, civil)</li> <li>• Unplanned work near underground services (electricity, gas, water,</li> </ul>	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<p>communications) leading to service strikes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to integrate auger activities into site permit-to-work systems (e.g. excavation permits, hot and cold work permits, confined spaces nearby)</li> <li>• Inconsistent pre-use planning for site access, work sequencing, and interaction with other trades or plant</li> <li>• No defined process for escalation when ground conditions are different to those expected (e.g. rock, voids, buried rubble)</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
6. Maintenance, Inspection and Plant Integrity Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of systematic preventative maintenance on augers, drives and associated carriers leading to mechanical failure</li> <li>• No formal pre-use inspection regime, resulting in operation of damaged or missing guards and controls</li> <li>• Use of non-genuine or incorrect parts and attachments causing risk of failure or instability</li> <li>• Inadequate management of vibration, lubrication and wear over time leading to increased exposure to hand-arm vibration and noise</li> <li>• Failure to tag out and remove from service defective augers or post hole diggers</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
7. Site Layout, Traffic Management and Exclusion Zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor planning of work zones around augers leading to workers or members of the public entering exclusion areas</li> <li>• Interaction between augers (handheld or vehicle-mounted) and other mobile plant or vehicles</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of augers in areas with inadequate ground bearing capacity for carriers or surrounding traffic routes</li> <li>• Inadequate separation from overhead powerlines, structures or open excavations</li> <li>• Lack of signage, barricades or spotters in high-traffic or public-access areas</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
8. Environmental and Ground Condition Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uncontrolled variation in soil types, buried materials or ground stability leading to collapse, jamming or sudden movement of the auger</li> <li>• Auger operation on steep or uneven terrain increasing risk of plant rollover or loss of control</li> <li>• Extreme weather (heat, wind, lightning) affecting equipment performance and operator safety</li> <li>• Water ingress into holes causing ground instability and difficult controlling auger operations</li> <li>• Noise and dust emissions affecting neighbours, nearby workers or sensitive environmental receptors</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
9. Manual Handling, Ergonomics, Vibration and Noise Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cumulative musculoskeletal strain from handling handheld augers, extension shafts and heavy posts</li> <li>• Exposure to hand–arm vibration and whole-body vibration from prolonged auger use</li> <li>• Excessive noise levels from motorised augers and carrier plant leading to potential hearing loss</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor ergonomic design of controls and handles increasing risk of strain and loss of control</li> <li>Inadequate organisational limits on shift length or rest breaks during intensive post hole digging</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
10. Emergency Preparedness and Incident Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of planning for entanglement, crush injuries or contact with underground services during auger use</li> <li>Inadequate first aid and rescue arrangements in remote or rural locations where post hole digging commonly occurs</li> <li>No clear process for isolating equipment quickly in the event of an incident involving rotating plant</li> <li>Poor incident reporting and investigation processes leading to repeat events</li> <li>Insufficient coordination with emergency services for work near public infrastructure or utilities</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
11. Worker Consultation, Communication and Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers not consulted on practical risks encountered during real-world post hole excavation, leading to impractical procedures</li> <li>Changes to auger equipment, attachments or work methods introduced without risk review or communication</li> <li>Language and literacy barriers preventing workers from understanding auger procedures and warning information</li> </ul>	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent communication between management, supervisors and field staff on expectations for auger use and limitations</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
12. Monitoring, Review and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Static risk controls that are not reviewed when new information, technology or incidents arise</li> <li>Lack of performance indicators specific to auger and post hole digging safety</li> <li>Failure to apply lessons learned from internal or industry-wide auger incidents</li> <li>Inadequate verification that documented controls, maintenance, permits are actually implemented in the field</li> </ul>	Medium	[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.