

**Rescue From Heights**

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.	<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, Legal Compliance and WHS Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of formal recognition of Rescue From Heights as a high-risk activity under organisational WHS governance arrangements</li> <li>Board and senior management not clearly understanding or discharging primary duty of care and due diligence obligations under WHS Act 2011 for emergency response at height</li> <li>Inadequate WHS policies and procedures specific to aerial and vertical rescue, suspension trauma prevention, and recovery after a fall</li> <li>Failure to integrate rescue-from-heights requirements into the overarching WHS management system, including consultation, risk management and incident response elements</li> <li>No clear assignment of roles, responsibilities and accountabilities (PCBU, officers, workers, contractors) for planning, resourcing and maintaining rescue capability</li> <li>Inadequate review for compliance with relevant Australian Standards, Codes of Practice and manufacturer instructions related to fall protection and rescue equipment</li> <li>Lack of documented criteria for when work at height must not proceed due to insufficient or ineffective rescue arrangements</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and endorse a corporate WHS policy that explicitly recognises work at height and rescue from heights as high-risk activities requiring specific controls and resourcing</li> <li>Assign clear governance responsibilities to officers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that appropriate resources and processes are in place for aerial and vertical rescue capability in line with WHS Act 2011 ss. 26 and 27</li> <li>Establish and maintain documented Rescue From Heights Governance Procedure that defines minimum organisational standards for emergency planning, rescue competence, equipment, and maintenance of capability</li> <li>Integrate rescue-from-heights risk management into the organisation's WHS management system, including formal risk registers, change management, contractor management and emergency planning processes</li> <li>Understand and regularly review a documented legal and standards register covering relevant Acts, regulations, Australian Standards and Codes of Practice related to fall prevention, fall arrest, vertical rescue and suspension trauma</li> <li>Define and document escalation and stop-work criteria where rescue capability cannot be provided to a safe and timely standard, and communicate this to all relevant managers and supervisors</li> <li>Implement periodic WHS governance reviews and internal audits focusing on the adequacy of rescue-from-heights arrangements, with findings reported to the executive and actions tracked to completion</li> </ul>	Medium
2. Risk Management and Emergency Planning Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rescue-from-heights risks not systematically identified, assessed and documented within organisational risk registers</li> <li>Emergency plans for work at height being generic and not specific to site conditions, access constraints, equipment in use or potential fall scenarios</li> <li>Failure to consider time-critical factors such as suspension trauma onset,</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed rescue-from-heights risk identification and assessment into the organisation's standard risk management procedure, requiring documented consideration of rescue capability for all work at height tasks, including aerial rescue, vertical rescue and recovery after fall, with clear triggers for activation</li> <li>Require development of site-specific Emergency Rescue From Heights Plans for all high-risk height tasks, including aerial rescue, vertical rescue and recovery after fall, with clear triggers for activation</li> <li>Include explicit assessment of suspension trauma risk in all fall-arrest scenarios, with documented maximum hanging times and response time targets based on current guidance and medical advice</li> <li>Implement a structured rescue-planning checklist that evaluates physical access, anchor points, equipment ratings, worker numbers, potential obstructions, and viability of external emergency services support</li> </ul>	Medium

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	<p>weather constraints, and complexity of access when planning rescue systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No structured process to assess the suitability of proposed rescue methods (self-rescue, assisted rescue, external emergency services) for each work location</li> <li>Inadequate integration of rescue plans with broader emergency management, communications and first aid systems</li> <li>Lack of documented performance criteria and response time targets for rescue and recovery after a fall from height</li> <li>Emergency planning not updated when work methods, contractors, plant, or site layouts change</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate rescue-from-heights plans into the organisation's overall Emergency Management Plan, ensuring alignment of communication protocols, roles, first aid arrangements and incident command structures</li> <li>Establish a formal review and approval process for rescue plans involving WHS specialists, competent rescue personnel and relevant supervisors prior to commencement of work at height</li> <li>Mandate periodic review of rescue plans (e.g. at least annually or after any incident, change in equipment, contractor or work method) and rescue personnel control within the WHS management system</li> </ul>	
3. Organisational Competency, Training and Authorisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers and supervisors involved in work at height not trained in emergency rescue procedures specific to aerial and vertical environments</li> <li>Insufficient awareness of suspension trauma, its onset, recognition and prevention among workers using fall-arrest systems</li> <li>Training limited to theoretical content with no competency-based assessment of rescue techniques and decision-making</li> <li>No system for verifying external contractors' qualifications and experience in height rescue before engagement</li> <li>Training frequency inadequate to maintain skills for low-frequency, high-consequence rescue tasks</li> <li>Absence of formal authorisation process to designate competent rescue team members and rescue coordinators</li> <li>Inconsistent record keeping on rescue-related training, refresher schedules and competency reassessments</li> </ul>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a Rescue From Heights Competency Framework specifying minimum training, skills and experience requirements for workers, supervisors and designated rescue team members</li> <li>Provide formal, nationally recognised training (where available) in vertical rescue, aerial rescue and suspension trauma awareness and prevention for all personnel expected to participate in height rescues</li> <li>Ensure training programs include scenario-based practical assessments for emergency rescue from heights, including communication, casualty handling, equipment operation and coordination with emergency services</li> <li>Implement a formal authorisation system whereby only workers assessed as competent are appointed in writing to roles such as rescue leader, rescue technician or standby rescuer</li> <li>Establish a refresher training schedule (e.g. at least annually) for rescue skills, with additional sessions following incidents, near misses, equipment changes or introduction of new rescue techniques</li> <li>Include rescue-from-heights awareness modules in induction and supervisor training programs, with emphasis on planning requirements and authority to stop work if rescue capability is inadequate</li> <li>Maintain centralised, auditable training and competency records within the WHS management system, including expiry dates and upcoming refresher requirements, and provide alerts to managers for renewals</li> </ul>	Medium

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4. Rescue Equipment Selection, Procurement and Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rescue equipment not fit for purpose for specific height tasks, structures or environmental conditions</li> <li>Reliance on general fall-arrest equipment without provision of dedicated rescue kits and retrieval systems</li> <li>Inconsistent equipment brands and models leading to compatibility issues between harnesses, connectors, rescue devices and anchorage systems</li> <li>Failure to consider ergonomics and manual handling risks when selecting rescue equipment, leading to reluctance to deploy or difficulty operating under stress</li> <li>Procurement decisions based solely on cost without adequate technical input from competent height-rescue personnel</li> <li>Lack of redundancy in critical rescue systems, leading to single-point failure during emergency operations</li> <li>No formal pre-commi verification and acceptance testing of rescue and retrieval systems</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. Equipment Inspection, Maintenance and Asset Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rescue and fall-arrest equipment not routinely inspected or maintained, leading to undetected damage or degradation</li> <li>Lack of traceability for equipment, resulting in overdue inspections and use of items beyond their service life</li> <li>Inadequate storage and handling practices causing accelerated wear or contamination of critical rescue components</li> <li>Maintenance performed by unqualified personnel, resulting in incorrect repairs or adjustments</li> <li>No clear criteria for equipment quarantine and disposal following incident, fall arrest or suspected damage</li> </ul>	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Low

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failure to include specialised aerial and vertical rescue equipment in the organisation's asset and maintenance management systems</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
6. Planning of Work at Height and Integration of Rescue Capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work at height planned without concurrent planning for timely rescue of fallen or incapacitated workers</li> <li>Failure to consider how existing structures, plant or temporary works will affect rescue access and egress</li> <li>Over-reliance on external emergency services without confirming their ability to perform vertical or aerial rescue at specific locations</li> <li>Multiple contractors working at height with inconsistent or incompatible rescue approaches and equipment</li> <li>Project planning focused only on productivity and access, with insufficient emphasis on emergency response requirements and timeframes</li> <li>Lack of coordination between design, engineering and VRS team during project planning, resulting in unrescuable work positions or anchor points</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
7. Contractor and Third-Party Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contractors undertaking work at height without adequate rescue-from-heights systems aligned to organisational standards</li> <li>Reliance on contractor-supplied rescue equipment of unknown condition or compatibility with host site systems</li> <li>No verification that contracted rescue teams or rope access providers have current training, competencies and insurances appropriate to vertical rescue activities</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inconsistent emergency communication protocols between host PCBU and contractor organisations during an incident at height</li> <li>Lack of clarity about which PCBU is responsible for planning, leading and resourcing rescue operations when multiple PCBUs share a workplace</li> <li>Contractor method statements and risk assessments focusing on work tasks but not on aerial rescue and recovery after fall</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
8. Communication, Command and Control During Rescue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clear command structure during emergency rescue from height leading to confusion, delays or conflicting instructions</li> <li>Ineffective communication channels between workers at height, ground personnel, control rooms and emergency services</li> <li>No predetermined protocol for requesting external emergency assistance or providing site location and access information</li> <li>Rescue team members not briefed on site-specific communication limitations such as radio dead zones or noise sources</li> <li>Critical information about injury status, suspension time and hazards not captured or relayed during the incident</li> <li>No arrangements for liaison with emergency services for complex vertical rescue scenarios at remote or constrained sites</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
9. Suspension Trauma and Post-Rescue Medical Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of organisational awareness of the onset and consequences of suspension trauma following fall arrest</li> <li>Inadequate planning for time-critical rescue where workers may remain suspended in harnesses</li> </ul>	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rescue plans not including procedures for safe post-rescue handling and positioning of casualties at risk of suspension trauma</li> <li>Insufficient first aid resources and training to recognise and manage signs of shock, crush injury or rhabdomyolysis following prolonged suspension or vertical entrapment</li> <li>Failure to ensure prompt medical assessment following any fall or prolonged suspension event, even if the worker appears uninjured</li> <li>No guidance for workers on self-relief techniques (e.g. trauma straps) while awaiting rescue</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
10. Training Drills, Testing and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emergency rescue-from-heights plans remaining theoretical and untested under realistic conditions</li> <li>Workers and supervisors not familiar with their roles during actual height emergencies due to infrequent or poorly structured drills</li> <li>Lessons from previous incidents, near misses or drills not being captured or acted upon, leading to repeated failures</li> <li>No objective performance criteria or benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of rescue drills over time</li> <li>Complacency developing regarding rescue readiness for low-frequency but high-consequence height emergencies</li> <li>Failure to test new or modified rescue equipment and procedures before relying on them operationally</li> </ul>	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low
11. Fatigue, Workload and Psychological Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rescue team members required to undertake physically demanding vertical rescues while fatigued or after long shifts</li> </ul>	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient consideration of psychological stress and trauma associated with rescue from heights, particularly where serious injury or fatality is involved</li> <li>No system to ensure adequate numbers of trained personnel are available per shift to safely execute rescue roles without over-reliance on a few individuals</li> <li>Inadequate rostering and workload planning leading to key competent rescue personnel not present when high-risk height work is undertaken</li> <li>Absence of support mechanisms for debriefing and psychological support following critical height incidents</li> </ul>		<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
12. Documentation, Records and Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incomplete or inconsistent documentation of rescue-from-heights policies, procedures, plans and risk assessments</li> <li>Inadequate record keeping of training competencies, drills, equipment inspections and incidents related to work at height and rescue</li> <li>Difficulty demonstrating compliance with WHS Act 2011 due to poor evidence of systems being implemented and reviewed</li> <li>Lack of regular auditing of rescue-from-heights systems leading to undetected deterioration in capability</li> <li>Paper-based systems resulting in lost or inaccessible records when urgently needed during or after an incident</li> </ul>	Medium	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Low

**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.