

Rope Access Systems

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 Legal Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to identify rope access and abseiling as high-risk construction work under WHS Regulations, leading to inadequate controls Lack of clear allocation of PCBU, officer and worker duties under the WHS Act 2011 for rope access operations Inadequate consultation, cooperation and coordination between multiple PCBUs (client, principal contractor, rope access company, drywall installer) Absence of a documented rope access management plan integrated into the broader WHS management system Insufficient consideration of inherently safer alternatives (e.g. EWPs, scaffolds) before selecting rope access systems Inadequate monitoring, review and audit of rope access safety performance and compliance 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a formal rope access governance framework referencing WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulations, relevant Safe Work Australia Codes of Practice and AS/NZS/ISO 22846 series for rope access systems Define and document roles, responsibilities and due diligence obligations of officers, managers, supervisors and workers in relation to rope access and abseiling activities Require early WHS planning during project design to apply the hierarchy of control and justify rope access selection over other access methods, with written risk-based justification Develop a Rope Access Management Plan (RAMP) that sits within the organisational WHS management system and covers planning, competency, equipment, emergency response and contractor management Implement a documented consultation process with workers, HSRs, contractors and principal contractor on rope access system risks and controls before and during works Set up a schedule of internal and external audits of rope access systems, documentation, training, and supervision, including corrective action tracking and close-out Exclude rope access activities and abseiling drywall installation in the organisation's WHS objectives, KPI and management review processes 	Medium
2. Rope Access System Design and Engineering Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poorly designed rope access systems that do not comply with relevant Australian Standards or manufacturer requirements Inadequate structural assessment, anchor points and building elements used for rope access and abseiling Insufficient redundancy systems (e.g. lack of independent backup lines and anchors) Use of rope access configurations unsuitable for drywall installation loads, dynamic movements or tool handling Failure to segregate rope access work areas from other site activities, creating collision and entanglement risks Inadequate planning for safe material handling (e.g. drywall sheets, fixings, tools) while suspended from ropes 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a competent rope access system designer or engineer to develop standardised rope access design templates in line with AS/NZS/ISO 22846 and relevant fall-arrest standards Require documented engineering verification or certification of anchor points, suspension systems and load paths, including consideration of dynamic loads from abseiling and drywall installation tasks Mandate dual-rope systems with independent anchors, backup devices and fall protection measures, and incorporate redundancy into all critical components Develop engineering guidelines and limitations for tool and material handling from rope systems, including maximum allowable loads and approved lifting/hauling methods Implement exclusion zones below and around rope access work areas using barriers, signage and coordination protocols with other trades Include specific design provisions for edge protection, rope protection (e.g. pads, rollers) and fall-object prevention (e.g. lanyards, tool tethers, secure fixings) Ensure all system designs are documented, reviewed and signed off by a competent person before first use and whenever conditions change significantly 	Medium

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3. Anchor Point Selection, Installation and Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of unsuitable building elements or fixtures as anchor points for abseiling and rope access • Incorrect installation or modification of permanent and temporary anchors without competent oversight • Lack of traceability and documentation for anchor ratings, inspection history and installation details • Anchor failure due to corrosion, concealed damage, overloading or incompatibility with rope access hardware • Use of unapproved improvised anchors during time pressure or changing work positions 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a formal anchor management system covering design, selection, installation, inspection, testing, tagging and decommissioning of anchors used for rope access and abseiling • Specify that only competent and authorised persons (e.g. structural engineers or certified anchor installers) may design or install permanent or temporary anchors • Maintain an anchor register with unique IDs, rated capacities, installation details, inspection dates, test certificates and any limitations on use • Implement periodic load testing and visual inspections of anchors in accordance with manufacturer requirements, Australian standards and site-specific engineering advice • Introduce a mandatory pre-use verification process in rope access plans requiring workers to confirm anchor IDs, ratings and inspection status before system rigging • Prohibit the use of improvised fixtures or improvised anchors through clear policy, training and supervision with a defined escalation process when adequate anchors are not available 	Medium
4. Equipment Procurement, Suitability and Standardisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement of rope access and abseiling equipment that does not meet relevant Australian, New Zealand or international standards • Use of incompatible equipment components (e.g. connectors, descenders, pulleys, harnesses) leading to system failure • Inconsistent branding and standards of gear resulting in confusion, misuse and training gaps • Procurement of equipment not suited to drywall installation tasks (e.g. insufficient tool attachment points, inappropriate hauling devices) • Purchase of counterfeit or poor-quality items through unapproved suppliers 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Low
5. Equipment Inspection, Maintenance and Retirement Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ropes, harnesses and hardware used beyond their service life or manufacturer-recommended inspection intervals • Damage to ropes and equipment from abrasion on building edges, chemical exposure, UV degradation or misuse 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of systematic pre-use and periodic inspections by competent persons Poor record keeping leading to untraceable inspection history and uncertainty about equipment condition Failure to quarantine or retire damaged or obsolete gear, resulting in inadvertent reuse in rope access operations 		[REDACTED]	
6. Worker Competency, Training and Certification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rope access workers and abseilers undertaking tasks without appropriate formal qualifications or logbook experience Inadequate training in system limitations, rescue techniques, and integration of drywall installation tasks while suspended Lack of verification of competency certifications, refresh training or currency of skills Supervisors not conducting rope access oversight, hazard identification and emergency coordination Poor understanding of systemic risks such as weather impacts, interaction with other trades and building-specific hazards 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
7. Planning, Risk Assessment and Permit-to-Work Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rope access and abseiling activities commencing without a documented risk assessment or work plan Insufficient consideration of environmental conditions (e.g. wind, rain, heat) affecting stability and control while suspended Inadequate assessment of interaction between rope access workers and 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<p>concurrent activities such as crane lifts, EWP's or façade works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to update risk assessments when work scope, building layout or methods change during the project • Lack of formal authorisation and oversight for high-risk rope access operations 		[REDACTED]	
8. Contractor Management and Interface with Other PCBUs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor selection of rope access contractors, including inadequate assessment of WHS systems, experience and financial pressures • Misalignment between principal contractor procedures and rope access company procedures, leading to gaps or conflicts in controls • Insufficient coordination when multiple PCBUs are involved in façade works, drywall installation and building maintenance • Contractual arrangements that prioritise productivity over safety, resulting in shortcuts, reduced inspection or supervision • Lack of defined communication pathways between rope access teams and other site personnel 		[REDACTED]	Medium
9. Supervision, Monitoring and Safe Work Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient on-site supervision of rope access teams conducting abseiling and drywall installation tasks • Supervisors responsible for too many workers or multiple concurrent sites, leading to reduced oversight • Lack of structured field verification that procedures, equipment and rescue plans are being followed • Complacency or normalisation of deviation from safe systems of work over time 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to detect early warning signs of fatigue, poor technique or unsafe improvisations while suspended 		[Redacted]	
10. Emergency Preparedness, Rescue and First Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to perform timely rescue of a suspended worker following equipment failure, medical event or entanglement Relying solely on external emergency services for rope rescue, leading to excessive rescue times Poorly developed or untested rescue plans that do not reflect the actual rope access configuration or drywall installation setup Inadequate availability of rescue equipment compatible with the rope access systems in use Lack of first aid capability for suspension intolerance, crush injuries, falling objects or manual handling incidents while on ropes 	High	[Redacted]	Medium
11. Health, Fatigue and Psychosocial Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical strain and fatigue from sustained suspension, awkward postures and manual handling of drywall materials while on ropes Heat stress, cold exposure, dehydration or sun exposure for workers operating on exposed building façades Psychological stress, anxiety or vertigo associated with working at height and time pressure to complete complex tasks Inadequate management of work hours, rest breaks and rotation between high-exposure tasks Poor reporting and management of musculoskeletal symptoms or stress-related conditions in rope access workers 	Medium	[Redacted]	Low

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12. Manual Handling and Material Handling Systems for Drywall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inappropriate systems for moving and positioning drywall sheets and associated materials while workers are suspended from ropes Overreliance on worker strength rather than planned mechanical or assisted handling systems Uncontrolled movement of drywall panels due to wind, pendulum effect or inadequate securing arrangements Falling objects (e.g. fixings, tools, panel offcuts) from workers dangling on ropes, posing risks to people below Lack of integration between rope access systems and site lifting plans (e.g. cranes, hoists) for drywall delivery to work faces 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
13. Environmental, Site Conditions and Change Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unexpected changes in building lay façade design or temporary works affecting rope access anchor locations and rope paths Adverse weather conditions (e.g. sudden wind gusts, storms, lightning) compromising rope access Exposure to dust, noise or hazardous substances released during drywall installation and construction activities Lack of formal process for managing change in rope access configurations, equipment or work locations Inadequate housekeeping around upper work areas leading to snagging or damage to ropes and equipment 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
14. Documentation, Records and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete or inaccurate documentation of rope access systems, risk assessments, training and inspections Loss of critical records (e.g. anchor certificates, equipment inspection logs, 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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	rescue drill outcomes) needed for demonstrating compliance and learning • Limited organisational learning from incidents, near misses and good practices in rope access drywall projects • Failure to update procedures and guidelines in line with new standards, technologies or lessons learned • Inconsistent document control between head office and field locations		[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	

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.