

Undertaking Arborist Activities

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, Legal Compliance and PCBU Duties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear allocation of WHS duties between PCBU, officers, workers and subcontractors undertaking arborist activities Failure to identify and comply with WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulation and relevant Codes of Practice (e.g. Tree Trimming and Removal, Managing the Risk of Falls at Workplaces, Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work) Inadequate WHS policy framework specific to high-risk arborist work (e.g. tree felling near powerlines, use of chainsaws, climbing systems) Poor due diligence by officers (directors/senior managers) in monitoring WHS performance for arborist operations Inadequate system for consultation with workers and HSRs about changes to plant, methods or scheduling of arborist work Insufficient integration of WHS requirements into business planning, procurement and tendering and sub-contract contracts 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a WHS management system (WHSMS) aligned with WHS Act 2011, relevant Australian Standards and ISO 45001, with specific modules for arborist operations Define and document PCBU, officer, manager, supervisor, worker and subcontractor WHS roles, responsibilities and authorities for arborist activities and communicate these via position descriptions and inductions Establish a legal register capturing applicable WHS legislation, Codes of Practice, Australian Standards and network operational requirements relevant to arboriculture, and review it at least annually Require officers to exercise due diligence by receiving regular WHS performance reports for arborist activities (e.g. incidents, near misses, training completion, audit outcomes) and minuting WHS discussions at board/director meetings Develop an Arborist Work Health and Safety Policy and supporting procedures that address high-risk work (climbing, aerial access, chainsaws, tree felling, traffic interface, work near energised assets) at a system level Implement a documented consultation procedure that mandates involvement of workers and Health and Safety Representatives in the development and review of arborist-related policies, safe systems of work and risk assessments Integrate WHS requirements and minimum standards (competency, equipment, supervision, emergency planning) into contract, tender and procurement documents for internal teams and external arborist contractors Schedule formal management reviews of the WHSMS at least annually, including specific review of arborist activities, resourcing, and continuous improvement actions 	Medium
2. Contractor and Subcontractor Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement of arborist contractors without verification of competency, licences, insurances or WHS management systems Inconsistent WHS standards between internal crews and external contractors performing arborist work Inadequate pre-qualification and selection criteria for high-risk arboricultural tasks (e.g. complex tree removals, crane use, work near roads or utilities) Lack of clarity over who controls the workplace and who is responsible for 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal contractor WHS management procedure covering pre-qualification, selection, onboarding, monitoring and review for arborist service providers Develop minimum WHS selection criteria for arborist contractors, including evidence of: industry-recognised arboriculture qualifications, high-risk work licences (where applicable), documented SWMS, plant maintenance regimes and incident management processes Require contractors to provide project-specific risk assessments and SWMS for arborist activities that interface with the PCBU's systems, and review them for adequacy before work commences Include WHS performance expectations, right of access for audits, incident reporting requirements and stop-work powers within contract terms and conditions Hold pre-start coordination meetings (e.g. toolbox talks) where multiple PCBUs are present to confirm roles, communication protocols, emergency arrangements and interaction with the public and traffic Establish a contractor monitoring program including scheduled site inspections, behavioural observations and review of documentation (training records, equipment inspections, incident reports) 	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing and monitoring control measures Poor communication and coordination between multiple PCBUs at shared worksites, including utility providers, traffic control providers and principal contractors Failure to monitor contractor WHS performance, leading to unmanaged drift from agreed safe systems of work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a preferred contractor register that records WHS performance history for arborist providers and use this information in future procurement decisions Define and document processes for suspension or removal of contractors from the approved list based on serious WHS breaches or repeated non-compliances 	
3. Competency, Licensing and Training Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arborist workers performing complex tree work without formal competency or adequate verification of skills and experience Inadequate training in hazard identification and risk assessment specific to arboriculture (e.g. tree stability, wind loading, decay, overhead services) Insufficient training on safe use and limitations of climbing systems, MEWPs/EWPs, chainsaws, rigging systems and chippers Lack of up-to-date training for work near overhead or underground electrical assets in line with network requirements No structured refresher training, resulting in skill fade and outdated practices being used Supervisors and team leaders lacking leadership and WHS management training for overseeing arborist crews 	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a competency framework for arborist roles that specifies required units of competency, licences, tickets and experience for each role (climbing arborist, EWP operator, grounds person, crew leader, planning) Implement formal training and competency management system (LMS or register) that records qualifications, currency, dates, refresher requirements and verification of competency assessments Mandate that only trained, assessed and authorised personnel undertake tree climbing, chainsaw operation, rigging, chipping and operation of MEWPs/EWPs or cranes Ensure completion of approved electrical awareness and vegetation management training for all personnel undertaking work near energised services, in accordance with local network operator or utility provider rules Provide structured WHS training for managers and supervisors covering risk management, incident investigation, consultation, permit systems and enforcement of safe systems of work in arborist operations Schedule regular refresher training (e.g. annually or biannually) for key high-risk skills such as aerial rescue, chainsaw use, rigging and traffic management, and document attendance and competency outcomes Implement a verification of competency (VOC) process for new workers and contractors before they are authorised to work independently in arborist roles Link competency requirements and currency to the electronic scheduling or permit-to-work systems so that personnel cannot be allocated to tasks for which they are not currently competent 	Medium
4. Planning, Job Allocation and Risk Management Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arborist work planned without adequate pre-site risk assessment, tree assessment or consideration of alternative methods (e.g. mechanical access vs climbing) Poor integration of WHS risk assessment into job planning, leading to last-minute decisions under time pressure 	High	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of defined criteria for classifying tree work complexity and required technical expertise, equipment and supervision levels Inadequate consideration of environmental and site conditions (wind, slope, soil conditions, wildlife, public interface, traffic, utilities) during planning Scheduling pressures and unrealistic timeframes that encourage unsafe shortcuts and insufficient set-up time for controls Failure to review incidents, near misses or lessons learned when planning similar arborist works 		[REDACTED]	
5. Plant, Equipment and PPE Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of unsuitable or poorly maintained plant for arborist activities (chainsaws, chippers, stump grinders, MEWPs/EWPs, cranes, rigging gear, climbing equipment) Lack of systematic inspection and tagging regime for climbing gear, harnesses, connectors, rigging equipment and fall-arrest systems Inadequate procurement controls leading to purchase of non-compliant or incompatible equipment and PPE Failure to maintain up-to-date records of inspections, servicing and repairs to critical plant and equipment Inconsistent provision and management of PPE (e.g. helmets with chin straps, hearing protection, chainsaw protective clothing, eye protection, cut-resistant gloves) Poor management of plant modifications or attachments (e.g. winches, grapples) that may change risk 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	profiles or invalidate manufacturer guidance		[REDACTED]	
6. Work at Height, Climbing and Fall Prevention Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a consistent system for planning and controlling work at height for arborist activities, including tree climbing and use of MEWPs/EWPs Inadequate assessment of tree structural integrity prior to climbing, increasing risk of anchor point failure or whole-tree failure No standardised climbing and rigging techniques or equipment configurations across crews and contractors Insufficient systems for inspection, testing and retirement of ropes, harnesses, lanyards and connectors used in arborist climbing systems Poor integration of fall prevention measures into job planning for work on slopes, embankments, tracks and elevated work platforms Limited governance over aerial rescue planning, capability and response times 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium
7. Traffic, Public Interface and Site Access Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate systems for managing interaction between arborist operations and road traffic, pedestrians and cyclists Lack of consistent use of traffic management planning for work on or adjacent to roads, driveways and public pathways Poor control of exclusion zones around tree felling, branch lowering, chipping operations and crane lifts Insufficient coordination with road authorities, local councils and utility providers where required permits or notifications are needed 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncontrolled public access to work areas in parks, schools, playgrounds and residential streets • Inadequate signage, barriers and communication equipment for field crews 		[REDACTED]	
8. Environmental and Weather Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of systematic consideration of weather conditions (wind, rain, storms, heat, lightning) in scheduling and authorising arborist work • Poor assessment of soil conditions, ground stability and slope, increasing risk of equipment overturning or tree failure • Extreme temperatures leading to heat stress, dehydration or cold-related health impacts for arborist crews • Inadequate controls for wildlife (bees, wasps, possums, snakes, birds) in trees or surrounding vegetation • No structured process for assessing fire danger, smoke, dust or air quality impacts on arborist operations • Failure to manage environmental impacts of arborist work (e.g. debris, contamination, noise) in line with organisational and regulatory expectations 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low
9. Emergency Preparedness, First Aid and Rescue Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate organisational planning for emergencies specific to arborist work, including falls from height, entrapment, contact with electricity, severe cuts and crush injuries 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of documented and practised aerial rescue procedures for climbers and MEWP/EWP operators Insufficient first aid equipment and trained first aiders within arborist crews and depots Poor communication systems for summoning emergency services, especially in remote or semi-remote locations No coordinated arrangements with local emergency services for complex rescue scenarios involving heights, confined spaces or powerlines Failure to review and update emergency plans following incidents or exercises 		[REDACTED]	
10. Health, Fatigue and Psychosocial Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged physical workload, awkward postures and repetitive tasks leading to musculoskeletal disorders among arborist workers Inadequate systems for managing fatigue associated with early starts, long days, seasonal peaks and travel between sites Exposure to noise, vibration and exhaust emissions without robust health monitoring programs Psychosocial hazards including time pressure, high job demands, remote work, exposure to traumatic incidents (e.g. storm damage response) and conflict with members of the public Insufficient support for workers returning from injury or illness, leading to aggravation or recurrence of conditions Lack of health surveillance and wellbeing programs tailored to arborist workforces 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low

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			[REDACTED]	
11. Information, Communication, Consultation and Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workers and contractors not receiving current WHS information, procedures or updates relevant to arborist activities Ineffective communication pathways between management, supervisors and field crews, leading to inconsistent implementation of systems Inadequate consultation mechanisms for workers to raise WHS issues or contribute to improvements in arborist work systems Poor document and record control, resulting in outdated procedures or missing evidence of compliance (e.g. training, inspections, permits) Language, literacy or cultural barriers that limit understanding of critical WHS requirements Limited feedback loop from inspections, audits and incidents into documented procedures and training materials 	Medium	[REDACTED]	Low
12. Monitoring, Audit, Incident Management and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of systematic monitoring of WHS performance for arborist operations, leading to unrecognised trends and recurring issues Under-reporting of incidents, near misses and hazards due to complex systems or fear of blame Inadequate investigation of serious incidents or near misses, resulting in superficial corrective actions Failure to verify that corrective actions from incidents, audits and inspections are implemented and effective Limited use of lead indicators (e.g. training completion, inspection rates, 	High	[REDACTED]	Medium

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	behavioural observations) in management decision-making • Insufficient integration of contractor performance data into overall WHS performance reviews		[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.