

Water Safety

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"> Lack of clear allocation of WHS duties relating to water safety under WHS Act 2011 Inadequate knowledge of applicable standards, codes of practice and local waterway regulations Failure to integrate water safety into the organisation's WHS management system No documented water safety policy or procedure for work near rivers, ponds and other water bodies Inadequate consultation with workers and Health and Safety Representatives on water-related risks 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a documented Water Safety Policy aligned with WHS Act 2011 and relevant regulations, codes of practice and Australian Standards Assign clear PCBU, officer and worker responsibilities for water-related risk management within the WHS governance framework Incorporate water safety into the organisation's WHS management system, including risk registers, audit programs and management review processes Ensure officers undertake due diligence training that specifically addresses water safety obligations and high-risk environmental conditions Establish formal consultation, communication and issue-resolution processes for water safety, including toolbox talks and HSR involvement 	3H
2. Water Risk Planning and Site Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate pre-planning of work locations near rivers, ponds, dams, tidal areas or stormwater infrastructure Selection of work sites with unsafe access to water edges, steep banks or unstable ground Failure to consider historical flood levels, currents, tides and seasonal variations in water depth Lack of contingency planning for changing water conditions or sudden weather events Insufficient consideration of isolation, access for emergency services and egress routes 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal pre-planning process for all work near water that includes site reconnaissance and documented water-risk assessment Develop and use a standardised Water Site Risk Assessment template that considers depth, flow, bank stability, access, isolation and rescue feasibility Require management approval for higher-risk water sites, with defined acceptance criteria and documented justification Integrate water safety considerations into project planning, route selection and scheduling, including avoidance of unnecessary proximity to water bodies Ensure planning includes safe access and egress points, clearly identified assembly areas and verified access for emergency services vehicles and vessels 	2M
3. Environmental and Weather Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled exposure to rapidly changing weather conditions affecting water levels and flow rates Failure to monitor rainfall, storm activity, flood warnings and tidal information Wind, waves or wake from passing vessels destabilising workers near the water edge 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish documented procedures for monitoring weather forecasts, flood warnings and tidal information before and during work near water Define environmental trigger points (e.g. rainfall thresholds, river height levels, wind speeds, tidal states) that require work to cease or additional controls Include environmental risks in pre-start briefings and daily risk assessments, supported by mobile access to Bureau of Meteorology and local authority data Implement seasonal planning (e.g. wet season protocols) with specific restrictions on work near high-risk water bodies 	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat stress, cold exposure or hypothermia reducing worker capacity to self-rescue Poor visibility due to fog, low light or glare increasing risk of slips or falls into water 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide guidance on appropriate work/rest regimes, thermal protection and sun protection for workers near water to maintain physical and cognitive capacity 	
4. Water Body Characterisation and Bathymetric Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited knowledge of water depth, sudden drop-offs or submerged hazards in rivers, ponds and dams Unassessed strength of currents, undertows, rips or hydraulic features near structures and inlets Unknown water quality, contamination or biological hazards that may impede rescue or recovery Unstable or eroding embankments near shallow water creating collapse or slip hazards Failure to identify stormwater inlets, culverts, siphons or other hydraulic structures that can entrain workers 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
5. Drowning and Fall-Into-Water Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncontrolled falls into or deeper water from banks, edges, platforms or temporary works Lack of systematic control for work within close proximity to water edges No formal policy on the use of personal flotation devices (PFDs) or fall-prevention systems Reliance on worker behaviour rather than engineered or managed controls Inadequate supervision of new or young workers near water bodies 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
6. Work Near Water with Electrical Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric shock or electrocution from powered tools, lighting or plant used near water Inadequate segregation between electrical sources and water bodies 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of incorrect IP-rated equipment for wet or damp locations • Failure of RCDs, portable power boards or isolation systems due to lack of testing or maintenance • Uncontrolled energisation of fixed electrical installations near jetties, pontoons, pumps or aerators 		[REDACTED]	
7. Plant, Vehicles and Equipment Interfaces with Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile plant or vehicles unintentionally rolling or sliding into water due to inadequate separation or ground stability • Poorly planned use of cranes, EWP, pumps or generators adjacent to water • Lack of engineered stop blocks, wheel stops or barriers between plant movement paths and water edges • Uncontrolled refuelling or maintenance activities near water contaminating water bodies and creating slip hazards • Inadequate procedures for recovery plant that becomes bogged or partially submerged 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
8. Worker Competency, Training and Induction for Water Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers lacking awareness of drowning risks, hydraulics and local water conditions • Insufficient training in water-specific emergency response and self-rescue principles • New workers or contractors not adequately inducted to site-specific water hazards • Assumptions about swimming ability without verification or assessment of relevant competence • No ongoing refresher training for supervisors managing teams near water bodies 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
9. Supervision, Monitoring and Worker Fitness for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate supervision levels for higher-risk activities near water 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to detect fatigue, impairment or medical conditions that may increase drowning risk • Workers undertaking lone work near water without adequate oversight • Complacency leading to non-compliance with water safety rules and exclusion zones • Limited management visibility of after-hours or unscheduled work near water bodies 		[REDACTED]	
10. Emergency Preparedness, Rescue and Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a documented emergency response plan for water incidents, including near-drowning and electrocution • Insufficient rescue equipment such as throw lines, poles, ladders or rescue boards at water-adjacent sites • Workers untrained in safe rescue techniques leading to multiple casualties • Delayed emergency services response due to poor location information or access constraints • Inadequate post-incident debriefing, investigation and psychological support 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
11. Communication, Navigation and Remote Location Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to raise assistance promptly when working near remote or isolated water bodies • Poor mobile coverage or unreliable communication systems at river or pond sites • Workers becoming disoriented or lost when working around large water bodies or floodplains • No documented journey management or check-in system for remote water work • Lack of accurate mapping and signage identifying designated safe access points and hazards 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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12. Contractor and Visitor Management at Water Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractors undertaking work near water without alignment to organisational water safety standards Visitors allowed uncontrolled access to areas adjacent to rivers, ponds or dams Inconsistent application of PPE, exclusion zones and electrical safety controls between different contractors Inadequate verification of contractor competence and emergency preparedness for water-related risks Language or literacy barriers preventing understanding of water safety information 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
13. Health, Hygiene and Water Quality Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to contaminated or stagnant water leading to infection or illness Contact with chemicals, algal blooms or biological hazards present in ponds, rivers or stormwater systems Skin conditions, respiratory issues or allergic reactions from prolonged exposure to poor water quality environments Inadequate decontamination procedures after contact with mud Lack of health surveillance where repeated exposure to contaminated water is possible 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
14. Documentation, Reporting and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete or inconsistent recording of water-related hazards, incidents and near misses Failure to review and update water safety procedures following changes in legislation or site conditions Lack of trend analysis for water-related events, preventing targeted improvements Poor document control leading to outdated water safety information being used on site 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal mechanism to capture worker feedback on effectiveness of water safety controls 			

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.