

**Wood Dust and Material Handling**

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.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

  

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. WHS Governance, Legal Compliance and Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of clear WHS policy specific to wood dust and material handling risks</li> <li>Failure to align procedures with WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulations and relevant Codes of Practice (e.g. Managing Risks of Hazardous Chemicals, Managing Noise and Preventing Hearing Loss at Work, How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks)</li> <li>No formal consultation with workers and Health and Safety Representatives about wood dust and chemical treatment risks</li> <li>Inadequate consideration of specific high-risk species (e.g. Sydney Blue Gum dust exposure) and treated timbers in the WHS management system</li> <li>Failure to identify and manage PCBU overlap and contractor interface responsibilities (e.g. kilns, MDF supply, chemical treatment contractors)</li> <li>No documented dusting process by Officers to monitor wood dust and material handling controls</li> <li>Insufficient review of trends related to chipboard processing, MD handling, plywood handling and stacking timber</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and implement a WHS policy that specifically references wood dust, chemically treated wood, thermal and fire modification processes, and material handling activities across the site</li> <li>Formally map legal and other requirements (WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulations, relevant Australian Standards and Safe Work Australia guidance) to internal procedures for sawmilling, kiln drying, MDF and particle board processing, plywood forming, and storage systems</li> <li>Establish a safety committee and regular consultation forums with workers including representatives from wood processing, softwood processing, chipboard processing, MDF handling and kiln operations to review wood dust issues</li> <li>Incorporate obligations for shared duties and contractor management into WHS procedures for kiln drying operations, thermal modification, chemical treatment and radio frequency gluing operations</li> <li>Ensure officers receive periodic briefings and reports on key WHS performance indicators for wood dust and handling (e.g. airborne dust levels, manual handling injuries, exposure to treated timber chemicals)</li> <li>Schedule an annual WHS management system audit focused on wood dust generation and material handling, including Sydney Blue Gum and other sensitising species</li> <li>Embed risk management outcomes into documented WHS objectives and targets, with specific actions to drive continuous improvement of dust and handling controls</li> </ul>	3H
2. Wood Dust Risk Identification, Assessment and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate identification of wood dust sources across processes (e.g. dust control in saw milling, levelling and squaring, alignment and levelling, chipboard processing, MDF handling, working with particle boards)</li> <li>Failure to recognise carcinogenic and respiratory risks of hardwood, softwood, MDF and particle board dusts, including Sydney Blue Gum dust exposure</li> <li>No systematic airborne dust monitoring program, or reliance on visual inspection only</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a site-wide wood dust risk register capturing each process: hardwood processing, softwood processing, chipboard and particle board operations, MDF handling, plywood handling, levelling and squaring, alignment and levelling, and timber storage management</li> <li>Implement a formal airborne dust monitoring program using a competent occupational hygienist, with scheduled personal and static sampling for inhalable and respirable dust, including species-specific risks (e.g. Sydney Blue Gum)</li> <li>Establish documented trigger points for review (e.g. new MDF or chipboard lines, higher production, new kiln drying techniques or fire hardening processes) and require a documented risk assessment prior to change</li> <li>Record and trend all monitoring data in a central database, with clear comparison to relevant exposure standards and internal action levels</li> </ul>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor characterisation of dust from thermal modification, heating process of bending plywood, hot-press moulded plywood shaping, fire hardening of wood and wood burning processes</li> <li>Lack of data on historical exposure (no baseline and follow-up sampling) to inform health surveillance</li> <li>Inconsistent use of risk assessment tools and exposure standards in decision-making</li> <li>Failure to reassess dust risks following changes in production rates, new equipment, or new materials (e.g. new glues/adhesives, new treated timbers)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate findings from monitoring into health surveillance programs and engineering upgrade plans for dust control</li> <li>Require that project and procurement approvals for new wood processing equipment include a documented dust exposure risk assessment and predicted emission rates</li> <li>Periodically review risk assessments with worker input capturing actual task practices in sawmilling, stacking timber, unloading of wood materials, overhead wood storing tasks and timber storage management</li> </ul>	
3. Engineering Controls for Dust Extraction, Ventilation and Containment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate local exhaust ventilation (LEV) at saws, planers, sanding stations, levelling and squaring stations, MDF cutting, chipboard processing and particle board machining</li> <li>Poorly designed or undersized dust collection systems leading to accumulation of fine dust on structural members and overhead storage areas</li> <li>Lack of enclosure or capture hoods at hot-press moulded plywood heating process of bending plywood, thermal modification of wood and fire hardening processes</li> <li>Ineffective ductwork layout or poor maintenance causing blockages, reduced airflow and dust leakage</li> <li>Discharge of dust-laden air back into workspaces due to inadequate filtration or bypass of dust collectors</li> <li>Use of portable woodworking equipment without integrated dust extraction or connection to central systems</li> <li>No engineering provision for negative pressure zones in high-emission areas such as sawmilling, wood drying process areas and chipboard processing lines</li> </ul>	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Design and install fit-for-purpose LEV systems for all significant dust-generating equipment including saws, planers, sanders, routers, levelling and squaring lines, MDF handling lines and chipboard processing machines, in line with relevant Australian Standards and guidance</li> <li>Ensure enclosure or partial enclosure of high dust emission points at plywood bending heaters, hot-press moulding stations, particle board and MDF machining centres, and trimming stations for treated timber</li> <li>Engage a competent engineer to review dust extraction design calculations (airflow, duct velocities, hood capture velocities) and verify adequacy before commissioning</li> <li>Fit high-efficiency filtration systems (e.g. baghouse or cartridge filters) and ensure dust is discharged to safe, external locations away from air intakes and public areas</li> <li>Implement a documented inspection, testing and maintenance program for LEV systems including static pressure checks, airflow verification and periodic independent performance testing</li> <li>Standardise procurement of woodworking machinery with integrated dust extraction ports compatible with the site dust collection system</li> <li>Engineer negative pressure in key dust zones (e.g. sawmill line, MDF cutting area) to prevent dust migration to clean areas such as amenities and administration offices</li> </ul>	2M

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4. Control of Hazardous Chemicals, Glues, Adhesives and Chemically Treated Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inadequate chemical management for wood preservatives, resins, formaldehyde-based binders, wood glues and adhesives used in MDF, particle board and plywood manufacture</li> <li>Failure to identify additional risks associated with handling chemically-treated wood and treated timber (e.g. CCA, LOSP) including off-gassing and fine dust toxicity</li> <li>Poor storage and segregation of hazardous chemicals used in chemically modifying wood, use of wood glues and adhesives, and radio frequency gluing operations</li> <li>Lack of specific controls for chemically modifying wood, safe curing of timber and thermal modification of wood where hazardous decomposition products may form</li> <li>Inadequate ventilation and fume capture at radio frequency gluing stations, glue mixing areas and curing ovens</li> <li>Incomplete Safety Data Sheet (SDS) library and lack of access for workers</li> <li>Failure to manage the safe disposal of chemically-treated offcuts, MDF dust and contaminated filters</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
5. Kiln Drying, Wood Drying and Thermal/Fire Modification Process Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncontrolled temperature and moisture gradients during wood drying process and precautions when kiln drying leading to cracking, steam release and structural instability of timber stacks</li> <li>Overheating during thermal modification of wood, implementing fire hardening of wood, heating process of bending plywood and wood burning processes causing fire or explosion</li> <li>Inadequate control and interlocks for kiln firing systems and hot-press moulding equipment</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of monitoring for emissions (e.g. VOCs, fumes) from kiln drying, safe curing of timber and thermal modification of wood</li> <li>Improper stacking in kilns leading to collapse or fall of timber during loading and unloading of wood materials</li> <li>Insufficient procedures for emergency shutdowns of kilns, heaters, RF gluing and hot-press machinery</li> <li>No documented process safety review when modifying kiln schedules or introducing new curing regimes</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
6. Material Handling, Mechanical Aids and Traffic Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliance on manual handling for unloading of wood materials, stacking timber, timber storage management and overhead wood storing tasks without suitable mechanical assistance</li> <li>Inadequate design of conveyers, roller tables and transfer systems for chipboard processing, MDF handling and plywood handling leading to jamming, sudden releases or product falls</li> <li>No systematic traffic management plan for forklifts, loaders and pedestrian movement in lumber handling procedures and storage areas</li> <li>Insufficient controls for handling long or flexible materials (e.g. plywood sheets, long timber lengths) leading to sudden spring-back or loss of control</li> <li>Poor layout of storage racking and stacking systems for softwood processing, hardwood processing and working with particle boards causing instability</li> <li>No formal pre-use inspection program for slings, clamps, vacuum lifters and other engineered lifting aids used for large boards and packs</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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7. Manual Handling, Ergonomics and Work Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repetitive, awkward or high-force manual tasks during alignment and levelling, levelling and squaring, sorting and lumber grading procedures</li> <li>• Poor workstation design when working with particle boards, MDF handling and chipboard processing resulting in over-reaching and twisting</li> <li>• High-frequency stacking and de-stacking of timber and sheet products without rotation of workers or job redesign</li> <li>• Inadequate planning for manual tasks associated with unloading of wood materials and stacking timber in kilns and drying areas</li> <li>• Lack of standardised procedures for team lifting and coordination during handling of long, heavy or unstable loads</li> <li>• Work rates driven solely by production targets without integration of fatigue management considerations</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
8. Storage Systems, Stacking Stability and Overhead Loads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unengineered stacking of timber, MDF, chipboard and plywood leading to collapse or sliding during normal operations or seismic events</li> <li>• Poorly controlled overhead wood storing tasks creating risk of falling objects onto walkways, transport routes and workstations</li> <li>• Inadequate timber storage management resulting in clutter, obstructed access routes and difficulty in fire-fighting access</li> <li>• Failure to account for load limits on mezzanines, racks and storage platforms holding heavy timber packs or particle boards</li> <li>• No formal inspection process for racking damage, pack strapping integrity and storage system condition</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncontrolled storage of treated timber and chemically modified wood in areas with poor ventilation</li> </ul>			
9. Fire, Explosion and Ignition Source Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accumulation of fine dry wood dust in ceilings, cable trays, roof structures and inside extraction systems creating explosion and fire risk</li> <li>Ignition sources from electrical equipment, hot surfaces, friction in machinery, RF gluing equipment and wood burning processes</li> <li>Inadequate segregation of hot work activities from high dust zones in sawmilling, chipboard processing and MDF handling areas</li> <li>Poor fire detection and suppression systems in kilns, hot-press moulded plywood shaping areas, thermal modification and fire hardening facilities</li> <li>Inappropriate storage of flammable adhesives, solvents and chemical treatments near ignition sources</li> <li>Lack of emergency planning for dust fires and explosion including failure of dust collectors</li> </ul>	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
10. Health Surveillance, Exposure Records and Worker Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Absence of targeted health surveillance for workers exposed to wood dust, especially hardwood, MDF, particle board and specific species like Sydney Blue Gum</li> <li>Failure to monitor for respiratory issues, skin sensitisation and effects from chemically modifying wood and treated timber</li> <li>No systematic recording of individual exposure data from dust monitoring and chemical risk assessments</li> <li>Poor integration of occupational health services with site WHS risk management processes</li> </ul>	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insufficient focus on psychological and fatigue risks for workers in high-demand production environments</li> </ul>		[REDACTED]	
11. Training, Competency and Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workers and supervisors not fully understanding the long-term health effects of wood dust, MDF and particle board exposure or the risks associated with chemically-treated wood</li> <li>Inadequate competency for kiln operation, wood drying process control, radio frequency gluing and hot-press moulded plywood shaping</li> <li>Lack of training on the correct use of engineering controls such as LEV, dust collection systems and mechanical handling devices</li> <li>Supervisors prioritising production over dust and handling control requirements due to insufficient WHS leadership training</li> <li>No formal verification of competency for new or transferred workers in high-risk areas</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
12. Contractor, Visitor and Supplier Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contractors undertaking maintenance on kilns, extraction systems, RF gluing equipment or storage racking without understanding site-specific wood dust and handling risks</li> <li>Suppliers delivering timber, MDF, chipboard and treated timber without controls for unloading and stacking timber safely</li> <li>Visitors entering production areas without awareness of dust and material handling hazards</li> <li>Inconsistent inclusion of WHS requirements related to dust and handling in contracts and purchase orders</li> <li>Poor coordination where multiple PCBUs share duties, leading to gaps in dust control, isolation, or emergency response arrangements</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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13. Plant, Equipment Design and Preventive Maintenance Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plant selected or installed without consideration of integrated dust control features for sawmilling, MDF handling, chipboard processing and working with particle boards</li> <li>Inadequate guarding and interlocks on moving parts in levelling and squaring lines, hot-press moulded plywood shaping and radio frequency gluing equipment</li> <li>Failure of preventive maintenance systems leading to breakdown of extraction fans, filters, kiln control systems and conveyors</li> <li>No formal defect reporting and rectification process for plant that affects dust control or material handling safety</li> <li>Use of outdated or modified equipment for thermal modification of wood, fire hardening and wood burning processes without engineering review</li> </ul>	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
14. Emergency Preparedness, Incident Management and Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of emergency planning for incidents unique to timber processing such as kiln failures, boiler explosions, storage stack collapse and emissions from chemically modifying wood</li> <li>Inadequate provision and maintenance of first aid, fire-fighting equipment and spill response resources in processing and storage areas</li> <li>Under-reporting of near misses and minor incidents related to dust exposure and material handling</li> <li>Poor analysis of incident data, leading to repeated events and missed opportunities to improve systems</li> <li>No formal process to review and update risk assessments following incidents, regulatory changes or new technical guidance</li> </ul>	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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.