General Excavation and Earthworks | SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT (SWMS)

TASK OR ACTIVITY: General Excavation and Earthworks

Business Name:		ABN:	SWMS#
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU OF THE PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a safe work method statement (SWMS) is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

Details of the person(s) responsible for ensuring implementation, monitoring and compliance of the SWMS as well as reviews and modifications of the SWMS.

Full Name:	Title:	Phone:

ALL PERSONNEL PARTICIPATING IN ANY ACTIVITY ON THIS SWMS MUST HAVE THE FOLLOWING COMMUNICATED	NAME OF ALL RELEVANT PERSONNEL WHO HAVE BEEN CONSULTED AND COMMUNICATED TO IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF THIS SWMS
Safety meetings or toolbox talks will be scheduled in accordance with legislative requirements to first identify any site hazards, then to communicate those hazards and then to further take steps to either eliminate or control each hazard.	
If an incident or a near miss occurs, all work must stop immediately. Depending on the severity of the incident, a meeting will be called with all workers to amend the SWMS if required. The meeting may also be an educational opportunity.	
Any changes made to the SWMS after an incident or a near miss must be approved by the Person Conducting Business or Undertaking and communicated to all relevant personnel.	
The SWMS must be kept and be available for inspection at least until the work is completed. Where a SWMS is revised, all versions should be kept. If a notifiable incident occurs in relation to which the SWMS relates, then the SWMS must be kept for at least two years from the occurrence of the notifiable incident.	

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS	
Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date SWMS supplied to Project Manager:	

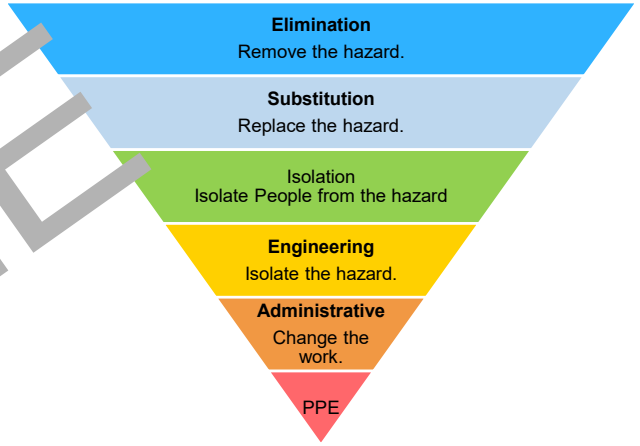
ANY HIGH-RISK CONSTRUCTION WORK BEING CARRIED OUT	
☐ involves a risk of a person falling more than 2 meters	☐ is carried out on or near pressurised gas mains or piping
☐ is carried out on a telecommunication tower	☐ is carried out on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
☐ involves demolition of an element of a structure that is load-bearing	☐ is carried out on or near energised electrical installations or services
☐ involves demolition of an element related to the physical integrity of a structure	☐ is carried out in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
☐ involves, or is likely to involve, disturbing asbestos	☐ involves tilt-up or precast concrete
☐ involves structural alteration or repair that requires temporary support to prevent collapse	☐ is carried out on, in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor
☐ is carried out in or near a confined space	☐ is carried out in an area of a workplace where there is any movement of powered mobile plant
☐ is carried out in/near a shaft or trench deeper than or tunnel involving use of explosives	☐ is carried out in areas with artificial extremes of temperature.
☐ is carried out in or near water or other liquid that involves a risk of drowning.	☐ involves diving work.

ANY HIGH-RISK MACHINERY OR EQUIPMENT NEARBY

RISK MATRIX

LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE		
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEE
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review befo work starts.
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	nitor and k records

HEIRARCHY OF CONTROLS



Notes on Hierarchy of Controls: Elimination methods are the most effective and preferre en co lli a hazard. Substitution is the second most effective method of controlling a hazard. Engineering by isolation is the ost ef ve, while Administrative Controls by changing the work is the fourth most effective method. PPE (Personal Protective Eq ment) he least effective method.

PERS AL P TECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Select the appropriate PPE abo uitable or the equipment used or the job task being performed (if applicable).

FOOT PROTECTION	HAND PROTECTION	HEAD PROTECTION	HEARING TECTION	EY CTION	RESPIRATORY PROTECTION	FACE PROTECTION	HIGH-VIS CLOTHING	PROTECTIVE CLOTHING	FALL PROTECTION	SUN PROTECTION	HAIR/JEWELLERY SECURED
											
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Other PPE Required:

Permit or Licenses Requirements	Mandatory Qualifications and Training

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
Pre-start planning and approvals	• Unidentified underground services • Inadequate excavation design • Unclear traffic and access routes • Uncontrolled public access • Uncoordinated works with crane operations • Incomplete ground disturbance perm	4A	• Obtain written excavation permit and ground disturbance approval from the Principal Contractor before starting any excavation activity • Review geotechnical reports, service drawings, Dial Before You Dig (1100) plans and as-built drawings for all excavation areas including basements, pits, pools, graves and foundations • Consult a competent engineer to specify excavation design, batter angles, benching, shoring and maximum depth for bulk excavation, basement excavation and pit construction • Plan and document excavation sequencing to avoid undermining adjacent structures, crane pads, strip footings and service trenches • Plan excavation staging so that excavation under or near any crane is only undertaken in accordance with a written engineered methodology and exclusion zone plan • Develop a traffic management plan showing haul roads, Ute and truck entry/exit points, turning areas and pedestrian exclusion zones • Nominate a Site Supervisor with excavation experience to control all ground disturbance activities and stop work if conditions change • Conduct a pre-start risk assessment (JSEA/SWMS briefing) with all workers and subcontractors, covering basement and bulk excavation, swimming pool excavation and shallow excavation work • Confirm emergency arrangements for trench collapse, flooding, fire in excavations and worker rescue, including access/egress routes for emergency services • Program works to avoid simultaneous critical activities such as excavation under crane slewing radius without specific controls and approvals • Identify any heritage, environmental or contamination constraints relating to disturbing previously disturbed material and grave preparation works • DO NOT commence excavation until all approvals, service locations, engineering requirements and traffic plans have been confirmed and documented	2M
Service location and ground investigation	• Damage to underground electrical cables • Damage to gas and water mains • Strike on telecommunications services • Unexpected voids and soft spots • Contaminated or asbestos containing soil • Uncharted graves or structures	4A	• Obtain current Dial Before You Dig (1100) service plans and mark up all known underground services on the site plan before any excavation • Engage a competent service locator to scan for cables and pipes using calibrated locating equipment in all planned excavation zones, including for swimming pool excavation and strip footing excavation • Use non-destructive digging (vacuum excavation or hand digging) to positively expose and visually confirm location and depth of critical services before mechanical excavation • Mark located services on the ground using durable paint and physical markers and update the excavation plans to show confirmed positions • Undertake geotechnical testing or probe holes to identify soil type, groundwater, backfilled material and voids in basement excavation and pit construction areas	2M

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
			• Sample suspicious or odorous soils and arrange laboratory testing for contamination or asbestos, following state-based contaminated land and asbestos in soil guidelines • Stop work immediately and notify the Supervisor if suspected graves, heritage items or unknown structures are uncovered during grave preparation or ground disturbance activity • Install temporary isolation valves or arrange shutdowns with utility providers where there is a high risk of service strikes during bulk excavation or trenching • DO NOT operate mechanical excavation equipment within the specified minimum clearance (as per service owner's requirements) of any exposed or identified live service • Maintain a live services register and ensure all workers are briefed on service locations before starting each shift	
Site establishment and demarcation	• Uncontrolled visitor entry • Vehicle and plant collision with pedestrians • Falls into open excavations • Poor access and egress to work areas • Inadequate fire safety in excavations • Unauthorised entry to graves or pits	4A	• Install solid perimeter fencing and lockable gates around the excavation site to restrict unauthorised public access, including graves, pits and swimming pool excavations • Set up designated entry points with sign-in registers and enforce visitor entry procedures including induction, PPE issue and escorted access to excavation areas • Erect warning signage at all access points stating 'Danger – Excavation', 'Authorised Access Only' and any specific hazards such as 'Deep Basement Excavation' or 'Open Pit' • Install hard barriers (e.g. guard rails, compliant edge protection) or secure bunting and star pickets at least 1 m back from the edge around all open excavations and trenches • Provide secure covers or barricades over pits, post holes and service trenches when unattended, including during post-excavation reparation procedures • Designate separate pedestrian walkways and plant haul routes using physical barriers or kerbing and clearly signpost crossing points • Provide at least two means of access and egress (e.g. rated ladders, stair towers or ramps) to excavations deeper than 1.5 m, spaced to maintain safe travel distances • Install fire extinguishers to AS 2444 at access points to basement excavations and enclosed pits, selecting appropriate types for fuel, gas and electrical risks • Keep excavation access pathways clear of loose rubble, spoil, hoses and leads to prevent slips, trips and falls when entering or exiting • Implement a lockable barrier or cover system to prevent after-hours entry to grave preparation areas and swimming pool excavations • DO NOT allow visitors or non-inducted persons to enter any demarcated excavation zone without direct supervision	2M
Plant mobilisation and inspection	• Unplanned plant movement • Plant rollover on unstable ground • Mechanical failure of excavators • Contact with overhead services	4A	[redacted]	2M

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
	• Collision with workers or structures • Failure of quick hitches and attachments		[redacted]	
Bulk and basement excavation	• Excavation wall collapse • Undermining adjacent structures • Striking underground services • Falling materials from excavation faces • Plant instability near edges • Entrapment in collapsing spoil	4A	[redacted]	2M

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
			[redacted]	
Trenching and service excavation	• Trench collapse onto workers • Engulfment in loose backfill • Asphyxiation in confined trenches • Water ingress and flooding • Falling into open trenches • Excavating below ground level near services	4A	[redacted]	2M

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
			[redacted]	
Footings, foundations and pit excavation	• Instability of strip footings • Collapse of footing trenches • Undermining neighbouring buildings • Falls into footing excavations • Working under crane loads • Inadequate pit construction support	3H	[redacted]	2M
Mechanical excavation and loading	• Contact between excavator and trucks • Overturning while loading • Falling material from buckets • Dust and flying debris • Noise from plant operations • Unplanned movement near visitors	3H	[redacted]	2M

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
			[redacted]	
Manual excavation and ground disturbance	• Musculoskeletal strain from digging • Hand tool impact injuries • Contact with hidden services • Collapse of small voids and • Loose stone and rubble falls • Flying fragments during scaling	3H	[redacted]	1L
Shoring, benching and edge trimming	• Failure of shoring systems • Collapse during trimming • Falls from excavation edges • Falling objects from lips • Incorrect installation of shields	3H	[redacted]	2M

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
	• Instability from over-trimming		[redacted]	
Fire safety and emergency preparedness	• Fire in confined exc[illegible]ion • Blocked escape routes • Explosion from gas or fu[illegible] • Electrocution from damaged leads • Delayed emergency response • Panic during trench collapse	3H	[redacted]	2M

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
Visitor management and site security	• Untrained visitors in work zones • Vehicle strikes on visitors • Falls into excavations by public • Interference with plant and controls • After-hours unauthorised access • Stress from managing funerary areas	3H	[redacted]	1L
Backfilling, compaction and regrading	• Collapse during backfill • Entrapment under moving plant • Instability of reinstated ground • Dust from dry fill materials • Damage to newly installed services • Vibration impact on nearby structures	3H	[redacted]	2M

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
			[redacted]	
Post-excavation repair and demobilisation	• Residual ground instability • Trip hazards from uneven surfaces • Unmarked services and structures • Leftover debris and s[illegible]jects • Uncontrolled reo[illegible]ning of excavations • Environmental co[illegible]mi[illegible]from spoil	2[illegible]	[redacted]	1L

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 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

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-of-codes-of-practice

Northern Territory
Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011
Legislation NT: https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws
Codes of Practice NT: https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/forms-and-resources/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

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.

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

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

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

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

SIGNATORIES OF THE SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT

The signed and dated personnel listed below have cooperated in the consultation and development of this Safe Work Method Statement which has been approved by the Person/s Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU). In signing this Safe Work Method Statement each individual acknowledges and confirms that they have read this SWMS in full, having raised any questions for items on this Safe Work Method Statement that require clarification, and confirms that they are competent, skilled and knowledgeable for the task assigned to them. Every person acknowledges that they have received the relevant training and qualifications where required, before carrying out any work contained in this Safe Work Method Statement. By signing this Safe Work Method Statement each individual agrees to work safely, to follow any safe work instructions which are provided, and agrees to use all Personal Protective Equipment where appropriate.

Worker Name	Signature	Date

SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT MONITORING AND REVIEW

The SWMS must be reviewed regularly to make sure it remains effective and must be reviewed (and revised if necessary) if relevant control measures are revised. The review process should be carried out in consultation with workers (including contractors and sub-contractors) who may be affected by the operation of the SWMS and their health and safety representatives who represented that work group at the workplace.

When the SWMS has been revised the PCBU must ensure that all persons involved with the work are advised that a revision has been made and how they can access the revised SWMS, including all persons who will need to change a work procedure or system as a result of the review are advised of the changes in a way that will enable them to implement their duties consistently with the revised SWMS. All workers that will be involved in the work must be provided with the relevant information and instruction that will assist them to understand and implement the revised SWMS.

The SWMS must be monitored regularly for the effectiveness of ensuring hazard controls are effective in reducing the risk of incidents, keeping the workplace safe for all personnel. The person responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of the Safe Work Method Statement should employ a multi-faceted approach which includes but is not limited to:

1. Spot Checks.
2. Consultation with workers, contractors and sub-contractors.
3. Internal audits on a continual basis.

An approach of continuous improvement, promptly recording inconsistencies or deficiencies, followed up by immediate corrective action and consultation with all relevant personnel ensures that the PCBU is consistently developing ever-improving systems of safe work principles.

REVIEW NUMBER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NAME							
INITIALS							
DATE							

SAFE WORK METHOD STATEMENT REVIEW CHECKLIST

This Safe Work Method Statement Review Checklist is to be followed and used upon initial development of the SWMS to help ensure that all steps have been adequately taken before work commences. Think of this document as an internal audit review checklist before commencing work, and may form part of a Toolbox Talk (safety meeting) and may be used as an opportunity for education and training.

ITEMS WHICH MUST BE INCLUDED IN THE SWMS	COMPLETED	COMMENTS
The company details have been entered, including the project name and address.	☒	
All relevant personnel consulted during the development of the SWMS.	☒	
Name, signature, position and date signed of the person approving the SWMS.	☐	
Specific personnel and qualifications, experience is noted in the SWMS.	☒	
Provides a step-by-step process of tasks required to carry out the activity or task.	☒	
Adequate risk assessment of any identified hazards has been completed.	☒	
Foreseeable hazards are identified and documented for each step.	☒	
Any hazards listed in any site risk assessments have been added to the SWMS.	☒	
SWMS initial risk (IR) column as well as residual risk (RR) column completed.	☒	
Check control measures added to the SWMS are the most effective selection.	☒	
Responsible person is assigned and listed on the SWMS for the implementation of control measures.	☒	
Permit or licenses requirements specified, such as Hot Work, Electrical Work, Work at Heights etc.	☒	
SWMS identifies plant and equipment to be used.	☒	
Details of inspection checks required for any equipment listed and noted on the SWMS.	☒	
Describes any mandatory qualifications, experience, training or skills required to perform the work.	☒	
Applicable personal protective equipment is selected on the SWMS.	☒	
Reflects and documents any legislative references and/or Australian Standards.	☒	
Identifies any hazardous substances used with specific control measures in line with any SDS.	☒	

REVIEWED BY		**DATE REVIEWED**	
SIGNATURE		**DATE COMPLETED**	