

Greetings all. Today's topic is about Safe Work Method Statements (SWMS)

SWMS are a crucial part of conducting High Risk Work (HRW) and are required by law. However, in recent times there is a lot of confusion about what is required on a SWMS and when they are required. SWMS are, not a procedure but rather a Statement of Control Measures that must:

1. Identify the High-Risk Construction work.
2. Specify hazards and risks related to the work.
3. Show measures to control the risks.
4. Show how the above is implemented, controlled and reviewed.

Legislatively, you do not need a SWMS for every activity you do on a jobsite, unless the activity falls into one of the following categories as nominated by [Worksafe](#) VIC. You do however need a plan to mitigate all known risks where practicable. This could include a Job Safety & Environment Analysis, (JSEA).

<input type="checkbox"/> Risk of a person falling more than 2 meters
<input type="checkbox"/> Likely to involve disturbing asbestos
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a shaft or trench deeper than 1.5 m or a tunnel
<input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
<input type="checkbox"/> Tilt-up or precast concrete elements
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in areas with artificial extremes of temperature
<input type="checkbox"/> Work on a telecommunication tower
<input type="checkbox"/> Temporary load-bearing support for structural alterations or repairs
<input type="checkbox"/> Use of explosives
<input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near energised electrical installations or services
<input type="checkbox"/> Work on, in or adjacent to a road, railway, shipping lane or other traffic corridor in use by traffic other than pedestrians
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near water or other liquid that involves a risk of drowning
<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition of load-bearing structure
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in or near a confined space
<input type="checkbox"/> Work on or near pressurised gas mains or piping
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
<input type="checkbox"/> Work in an area with movement of powered mobile plant
<input type="checkbox"/> Diving work

There have been cases of Principal Contractors (PC's) demanding 60-70 page SWMS containing useless and irrelevant activities and information that only reduces the likelihood of someone actually reading the

document properly. The Office of the Federal safety Commissioner does not require this and has issued this [fact sheet](#). When required, a SWMS should only be a few pages long. For example, mowing is not a HRW activity normally, (unless it's done above 2m with mobile plant!)



SWMS should be completed before work starts by the person(s) undertaking the works and made available to the Principal Contractor. They must be set out and expressed in a way that is readily accessible and understandable to persons who use it. This includes languages too, obviously.

Generic SWMS templates are acceptable if they contain SITE SPECIFIC info i.e. refer to risks, hazards and controls specific to the particular site.



If you are a PC, your obligations are to obtain the SWMS before the work starts and ensure compliance via supervision. The SWMS should be added to your Work Health and Safety Management plan which should include arrangements for collecting, assessing, monitoring and reviewing the SWMS. **With a SWMS there is no transfer of duty. You cannot contract out your WHS responsibilities and as a PC, you have a duty of care for all workers you engage which means ensuring they all comprehend and understand the SWMS prior to commencing HRW.** The site supervisor or identified person is responsible for implementation but the responsibility of COMPLIANCE is shared by Supervisor and PC. ***Remember: "You can delegate Authority, but you can't delegate Responsibility"***

Stay Safe -CICA