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## What are Safe Working Method Statements?

A safe work method statement (SWMS) sets out the high-risk work that will be performed along with relevant controls, codes or legislation. An SWMS is a statement of the risk control measures identified for the specific high-risk work task. The SWMS demonstrates that any high-risk hazards that may affect the work being undertaken have been identified and there are control measures in place to reduce or remove the risk. An SWMS provides supervisors, workers and other persons at the workplace with information about the established risk control measures that must be implemented in relation to the high-risk work to be carried out.

The safe work method statement is an overarching safety document that identifies the high-risk activities to be performed on a worksite, the hazards and risks arising from those activities and the measures to be put in place to control the risks. An SWMS remains in place for the duration of the project and is only amended or updated if there is a significant and permanent change in the work environment.

A safe work method statement is not a Safe Operating Procedure but may include Safe Operating Procedures. A safe work method statement is not a risk assessment or Job Safety Assessment. The risk assessment is carried out before the SWMS is developed. The Job Safety Assessment interacts with the SWMS in so far as there may be new risks or hazards present on a particular day (for example poor weather), that were not otherwise addressed in the SWMS.

Commonly and legally a safe work method statement is used for high risk construction work. The OHS Regulations 2017 (OHS Regulations) require the University and its contractors to prepare a SWMS before commencing 'high risk construction work', if that work poses a risk to the health or safety of any person including other persons on site or the public.

## Safe Working Method Statement policy

The following construction activities require a safe work method statement:

- where there is a risk of a person falling more than two metres
- on or adjacent to roadways or railways used by road or rail traffic
- in, over or adjacent to water or other liquids where there is a risk of drowning
- at workplaces where there is any movement of powered mobile plant
- structural alterations that require temporary support to prevent collapse
- in an area where there are artificial extremes of temperature
- on or near energised electrical installations or services
- involving a trench or shaft if the excavated depth is more than 1.5 metres
- on or near pressurised gas distribution mains or piping

- involving demolition
- involving a confined space
- on or near chemical, fuel or refrigerant lines
- involving tilt-up or precast concrete
- on telecommunications towers
- involving diving
- involving removal or likely disturbance of asbestos
- in an area that may have a contaminated or flammable atmosphere
- involving the use of explosives
- involving a tunnel

The responsibility for preparing a safe work method statement is with the contractor before commencing high risk work. The University's representative (contract manager or job captain) is responsible for ensuring this is done.

If the University's representative becomes aware that there is noncompliance with the safe work method statement, they must stop the work immediately or as soon as it is safe to do so, and not allow it to resume until the SWMS is complied with or reviewed and revised as necessary.

A generic, pre-prepared safe work method statement which seeks to address a range of hazards that will potentially be encountered is not acceptable unless further work is done to make it 'site-specific'. This can be done by reviewing and revising it as necessary with regard to its suitability for the specific environment and circumstances in which the work will be performed. An electronic safe work method statement is acceptable if it is accessible to all the workers involved.

## What needs to be included in a SWMS?

As a minimum, the safe work method statement must:

- identify work that is HRCW,
- state the hazards and risks to health and safety from that work,
- clearly detail the measures selected to control those risks,
- describe how the risk control measures will be implemented, and
- be set out and expressed in a way that is readily accessible and comprehensible to the persons who use it.

The safe work method statement must also identify the:

- date and location the HRCW is to be performed
- person/s responsible for ensuring selected risk controls are installed and maintained
- names of workers consulted in the document's preparation.

## Supporting Documents

[Deakin University OHS Manual:](#)

- [Hazard Isolation Standard](#)
- [OHS Risk Management Standard](#)
- [Other Risk Assessments](#)
- [Permit System Standard](#)
- [Safe Operating Procedure Register Template](#)
- [Safe Operating Procedure Template](#)
- [Safe Working Method Statements](#)

NSW WorkCover : [Writing work method statements in plain English](#)

WorkSafe: [Safe Work Method Statements](#)

Safe Work Australia: [Safe Work Method Statement](#) (Includes Word SWMS Template)

Western Australian Government: [OHSE Subbypack](#)

DOCUMENT HISTORY	
<b>Name of procedure</b>	<i>Safe Work Method Statement (Instruction)</i>
<b>Overarching policy</b>	<i>Health Wellbeing and Safety policy</i>
<b>OHS Manual</b>	<i>Safe Work Practices</i>
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