



Serious about farm safety

A guide to developing a health and safety management system for small to medium sized agricultural businesses

worksafe.qld.gov.au

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Introduction

Serious about farm safety will assist small to medium sized agricultural businesses to develop a system to manage health and safety risks around the property and other agricultural workplaces. Implementing a simple health and safety system will reduce the risk of workplace injuries and can help you to reduce your workers' compensation premium.

All business owners and employers are required to provide a safe workplace for workers and visitors. This guide will help you cut through the complexities of work health and safety regulation and compliance.

Workplace health and safety policies and procedures should form the framework of a health and safety system. The information and templates will help you set up your own safety system. You can download the blank templates from the CD or from **worksafe.qld.gov.au**.

Reference should also be made to the legislation and codes of practice available at **worksafe.qld.gov.au**.

- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act)
- *Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011* (WHS Regulation)
- *Electrical Safety Act 2002* (ES Act)
- *Electrical Safety Regulation 2013* (ES Regulation).



Essential definitions

Officer – is a person who makes, or participates in making decisions that affect the whole or substantial part of the organisation's activities.

Person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) – is a business or an undertaking that is either done alone or with others, whether or not for profit or gain. A PCBU can be a sole trader (e.g. a self-employed person), a partnership, company, unincorporated association or government department or public authority (including municipal council).

Person with management or control – a PCBU with management or control over the workplace.

Plant – machinery, equipment, appliance, container, implement or tool.

Structure – anything that is constructed, whether fixed or moveable, temporary or permanent and includes buildings, masts, towers, framework, pipelines, transport infrastructure and underground works (shafts and tunnels).

Substance – any natural or artificial substance in the form of a solid, liquid, gas or vapour.

Supply – supply and resupply of a thing provided by way of sale, exchange, lease, hire or hire purchase arrangement.

Volunteer – a person who acts on a voluntary basis, regardless of whether they receive out of pocket expenses.

Work group – a group of workers who share similar work conditions (e.g. workers in a packing shed).

Worker – includes employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and PCBUs, who are individuals if they perform work for the business.

Workplace – any place where work is carried out for a business or undertaking. This may include offices, factories, shops, construction sites, farms, packing sheds, vehicles, ships aircraft or other mobile structures on land or water such as offshore units and platforms.

Legislation

What duties apply?

All workers in Australia are protected by work health and safety laws. This includes employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and employers who perform work. The WHS Act also helps to protect the general public so their health and safety is not put at risk by work activities.

Work Health and Safety Act 2011

The WHS Act provides a nationally consistent framework to protect the health, safety and welfare of all workers at work and of all other people who might be affected by the work.

Anyone with duties under the WHS Act should refer to the WHS Regulation and applicable codes of practice.

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011

The WHS Regulation outlines how a duty under the WHS Act must be performed and prescribes procedural or administrative matters to support the WHS Act (e.g. licences for specific activities or record keeping).

Electrical Safety Act 2002

The ES Act is the legislative framework for electrical safety in Queensland and is designed to prevent people from being killed or injured and property from being destroyed or damaged by electricity.

Electrical Safety Regulation 2013

The ES Regulation 2013 identifies specific ways to meet electrical safety duties under the ES Act.

Codes of practice

Codes of practice give practical guidance to assist duty holders to meet the requirements of the WHS Act and the ES Act, and provide effective ways to identify and manage risks.

Compliance with Acts and Regulations may be achieved by following a method that is not set out in the code of practice. Codes of practice are not mandatory and a duty holder may choose to use another way to achieve compliance, however, any other method must provide an equivalent or higher standard of work health and safety than suggested by the code of practice.

General responsibilities

A PCBU must manage health and safety risks to workers, customers, visitors and onlookers to the work activity. These risks can be managed by providing: safe environments for workers, safe systems of work, safe plant and machinery, safe storage of hazardous chemicals, adequate facilities for workers, access to relevant information, induction, training and supervision of workers, a monitoring program for workers' health and suitable workplace conditions.

Although there are similarities in work practices and hazards, every agricultural business is likely to be different in some way and will need to develop its own safety solutions.

Duties

The WHS Act outlines general health and safety duties of employers and workers. In addition, people with control of a workplace or designers, manufacturers, importers, suppliers and installers of plant or structures will have duties to follow.

A person may have more than one duty. For example, the working director of a company has duties as an officer of the company and also as a worker. More than one person may have the same duty. For example, a property owner and a contractor share the duty of ensuring the health and safety of workers while on the property.

Officers of a PCBU must also exercise due diligence to ensure the PCBU complies with its health and safety duties and obligations and show they have taken reasonable steps to manage health and safety. There are detailed definitions for an 'officer' and 'due diligence' at worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Duty to consult

Employers have a duty to consult with their workers and health and safety representatives (HSRs) about matters that directly affect them in the workplace. This includes consulting with contractors, workers from a labour hire company, students or family members working on the property, apprentices, trainees and volunteer workers.

If there is more than one duty holder in the workplace, (e.g. the property owner and contractor) they have a duty to consult with each other, cooperate to meet health and safety obligations and share information.

Reasonably practicable

The guiding principle of the WHS Act is that all people are given the highest level of health and safety protection from hazards arising from work, so far as is reasonably practicable.

In other words, what could be reasonably done at a particular time to ensure ongoing health and safety, taking into account:

- the likelihood of the relevant hazard or risk occurring
- the degree of harm that might result from the hazard or risk
- what the person knows, or ought to reasonably know, about the hazard or risk and the ways of eliminating or minimising the risk
- the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or minimise the risk.

Workers

Workers also have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and not adversely affect the health and safety of other people. Workers must comply with any reasonable instruction and cooperate with any reasonable health and safety policy or procedure (e.g. workers must follow procedures for operating machinery or instructions to wear personal protective equipment).

Safety management systems

Work health and safety does not have to be complicated. Safety management systems can be customised depending on the size, needs and activities of the agricultural business. The following elements are essential for a safety management system.

Management commitment

The primary responsibility for a safe workplace rests with the employer. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure everyone is clear about their health and safety responsibilities and to build the safety culture. That means being prepared to implement safe work practices and systems, identifying and controlling risks, providing sufficient time and safe and effective tools to achieve the desired work outcomes, engaging with workers and ensuring notifiable incidents are reported.

A manager who leads by example and promotes health and safety as a high priority sends a message that your business is serious about safety. An easy starting point to demonstrate this commitment to safety is to develop a workplace health and safety (WHS) policy. A WHS policy forms the framework for all your business and work operations. A policy describes the expected standards, priorities and timeframes for health and safety for workers and employers. It should also contain information about consulting with workers or their elected representatives.

The policy should be signed off by the business owner and a worker representative and have a date of review to keep it relevant for your workplace. All workers should be made aware of the WHS policy, have access to it and ensure that it is understood.

Refer to T1 – Sample Health, safety and wellbeing policy

Management commitment

- Determine safety responsibilities and clearly communicate them.
- Commit time and resources.
- Make safety a priority.
- Demonstrate commitment to safety at the highest level in the organisation.
- Maintain the commitment to safety and build the safety culture.

Refer to T2 – Management commitment checklist

Consultation, cooperation and coordination

The decisions you make will have health and safety consequences for everyone at your workplace. The WHS Act requires employers to consult, cooperate and coordinate activities with all other people who have a work health and safety duty in relation to the same matter.

This includes cooperation between the people who manage or control the work and those who carry out the work or who are affected by the work. A safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone communicates with each other to identify hazards and risks, talks about health and safety concerns and works together to find appropriate solutions.

By consulting with your workers, you can share WHS information with them and take their views into account before making any decisions. Including workers in the decision-making process shows clear management commitment to safety and by regularly consulting with them they can alert you to any WHS issues they experience and be involved in finding solutions to those issues. Your workers are often best placed to identify solutions that you may have overlooked.

Consultation can be conducted through formal talks or an informal discussion, such as during breaks. The chosen format will depend on the type and size of your business. You should keep records or diary notes of what was discussed and any action items.

Regular consultation is better than only consulting when issues arise; this allows you to proactively identify and fix potential problems early before they result in an injury.

Refer to T3 – Record of staff toolbox meeting



Health and safety representatives (HSRs) are elected by a work group to represent their fellow workers' health and safety interests. Whether the work group has a HSR will depend on the size of your workforce and whether the workers make a request to elect one. There are a number of requirements to be met to elect a HSR which can be found at worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Health and safety committee

A health and safety committee facilitates cooperation between a PCBU and workers in developing and carrying out measures to ensure health and safety at work.

For more information, read the *Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination code of practice 2011* and the *How to manage work health and safety risks code of practice 2011* at worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Consultation, cooperation and coordination

- Implement consultation arrangements suitable for your workplace.
- Record decisions that affect safety.
- Encourage your workers to become involved.
- Send a clear message about the importance of safety.
- Review safety solutions for effectiveness.

Risk management

The most important aspect of work health and safety is to manage risk, by identifying and controlling hazards that could be harmful to you or your workers.

Employers must do whatever is reasonably practicable to eliminate or minimise health and safety risks arising from their business or undertaking. The easiest way to manage risk is to consider the three elements: workers, processes and methods of work.

Risk management involves four steps which are set out in *How to manage work health and safety risks code of practice 2011*:

- Identify hazards – find out what could cause harm.
- Assess risks – understand the nature of the harm that could be caused by the hazard, how serious the harm could be and the likelihood of it happening.
- Control risks – implement the most effective control measure that will eliminate or reduce the risk, using the hierarchy of controls, and that is reasonably practicable in the circumstances.
- Periodically review control measures to ensure they are working as planned.

Identify the hazards

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause injury, illness or damage to health. To identify hazards in your workplace:

- inspect the workplace for potentially hazardous equipment, plant, machinery and activities
- monitor the work performed by each staff member and note any hazards while doing these tasks
- draw on the knowledge and experience of your staff and other producers/growers and ask what causes problems, incidents, injuries or near misses (involving your staff in the discussion will increase their acceptance of changes)
- review manufacturer's instructions on using equipment, machinery and products
- review any regulatory requirements and codes of practice
- compare your business' injury and incident records with the wider industry.

Hazards of a fruit growing orchard may include:

- manual handling, such as lifting heavy objects or frequent/repetitive lifts
- use of hand tools and/or power tools
- operating machinery, rural mobile plant, elevating work platforms (EWPs)



- operating a chainsaw
- hazardous chemicals
- picking fruit from ladders
- overhead power lines
- moving fruit bins
- noise
- sun exposure.

Hazards on a turf farm may include:

- operating machinery
- overhead power lines
- handling hazardous chemicals
- sun exposure
- manual handling, such as lifting heavy objects or frequent/repetitive lifts
- flying particles
- dust.

Hazards in beef cattle production may include:

- riding a horse, quad bike or motorbike
- animal handling in stockyards, when mustering and when loading and unloading stock
- working in and maintaining stockyards
- handling chemicals
- sun exposure
- dust
- zoonoses.

Assessing risks

During the assessment process you should observe:

- how each hazard may cause harm
- the effectiveness of existing control measures
- how work is being done versus how it is meant to be done (rather than relying on written manuals and procedures which may not be followed).

Include non-production tasks such as maintenance, cleaning and equipment breakdowns.

The likelihood that someone will be harmed can be estimated by knowing:

- the frequency and duration your workers are exposed to a hazard
- the effectiveness of the current controls to reduce risk
- whether hazards are more likely to cause harm because of the working environment
- whether the way people act, their language, cultural differences or their behaviour will affect the likelihood of a hazard occurring.

You can rate the likelihood as one of the following:

- certain to occur – expected to occur in most circumstances
- very likely – will probably occur in most circumstances
- possible – might occur occasionally
- unlikely – could happen at some time
- rare – may happen only in exceptional circumstances.

The level of risk will increase as the likelihood of harm and its severity increases. It is mandatory to complete risk assessment forms for all the identified hazards, such as confined spaces and hazardous chemicals, and keep a copy for future reference.

Controlling risks

Controls should be implemented according to the hierarchy of risk control.

Once all the hazards are listed and the level of risk assessed, you will need to control each risk. The items with the highest level of risk need to be addressed first.

The ways of controlling risks are ranked from the highest level of protection to the lowest in the hierarchy of risk control. If the hazard cannot be eliminated, you must minimise the risk by putting control measures in place. There may be more than one control method or there may be a combination of controls. You may need to use the best solution at the time while developing a more effective control, which may take more time and resources.

Things to consider when deciding on control measures include the:

- physical environment (e.g. the terrain, heat, cold, wet surfaces, and overhead power lines)
- nature of the work, the process and working conditions, required qualifications, training and knowledge of the task
- nature and severity of any potential injury or disease.

Hierarchy of risk control

Level 1

Eliminate the hazard.

Level 2

Substitute the hazard with something safer.

Isolate the hazard from people.

Reduce the risks through engineering controls.

Level 3

Reduce exposure to the hazard using administrative actions (e.g. safe work procedures, training).

Use personal protective equipment (PPE).

PPE is the lowest level of control and other controls should be considered first. PPE is often used in conjunction with other control measures.

Refer to T4 — Risk assessment form

Refer to T5 — Risk register template

Reviewing the controls

Monitor and review your control measures to check if:

- they have been implemented as planned
- the risk is being controlled
- the controls have not introduced any new problems.

Safe work procedures

Safe work procedures (SWPs) will help your workers consistently and safely manage specific work tasks to avoid injury or illness while doing them. They are an administrative control that outlines the sequence of steps to do a task safely. To be effective, SWPs should be developed in consultation with your workers.

Developing a safe work procedure

1. Choose a task and analyse it

You may need to refer to information sources such as equipment manuals, your workers, safety data sheets or industry guides.

Break the hazardous task into steps and determine possible risks and control solutions. Identify any physical changes to your workplace that are required, such as adding a guard to moving machinery or any new equipment needed to replace dangerous equipment.

To develop your SWP, combine the task's steps with the most appropriate controls. Adding pictures to each step will help to clearly describe the process.

The final SWP should be signed and dated by a manager and be readily accessible for workers.

The next hazardous task should use the same process.

Refer to T6 — Task analysis template

Sample safe work procedure

Job name	Station bore run
	The bore run covers eight bores with diesel pumps, and three windmills. The run is along a 360 km route in isolated areas of the property and includes black spots for radio reception. Most times it is a single person run. You are required to fill all fuels, check all tank levels, check all troughs for float valve operation, leaks, and cleanliness, and check operation and flows on all wind mills.
Describe the main hazards of the job	Actions to be taken
1 Travelling in isolated areas or working on your own	Take an appropriate communication device and know how to use it. Have someone accompany you on your first trip. Take sufficient food and water with you.
2 Mechanical breakdown	Check the vehicle's mechanics, including the oil, water, tyres, lights and battery before you leave. Take spare tyres, a tool box and ensure you know some basic mechanics. Stay with the car if it breaks down.
3 Travelling on rough roads	Drive according to conditions. Use 4WD where appropriate. Don't cross flooded creeks.
4 Decompression levers	Always use the decompression levers for diesel engines in the event of a break-down. Know how to use them.
5 Working at heights	Do not work at heights, such as windmill platforms, unless you have edge protection or use a harness. Make sure your boots are clean, use gloves for better grip and ensure loose clothing is tucked in.
6 Heat stress	Avoid heat stress and always drink plenty of water, wear a hat, and wear long sleeve shirts and long pants.
7 First aid	Check the first aid kit prior to departure, and include items for snake bites, burns and splints for broken bones. Make sure you have basic first aid knowledge.
8 Protective clothing	Always wear a wide brim hat, strong ankle-supporting boots, long pants, long sleeve shirt, gloves and climbing harness.

Sample SWP for tractor use

DO NOT use this machine unless you have been instructed in its safe use and operation.



Pre-operational checks:

1. Ensure that the seatbelt, roll over protective structure (ROPS), falling objects protective structure (FOPS, where fitted) and power take-off (PTO) guard are in sound condition.
2. Faulty equipment must not be used. Report suspect machinery immediately.
3. Check the three-point linkage, pneumatic and hydraulic systems are functioning.
4. Use only implements that meet the specifications listed in the vehicle operation manual.
5. Ensure the tractor driver is trained, competent and licensed if driving on public roads.
6. Check all lights and warning devices are operational and the vehicle is registered, if driving on public roads.
7. *Add others as appropriate.*

Do not allow any person other than the driver to ride on the tractor.

Operational safety checks

1. Never start or operate levers from anywhere other than the driver's seat.
2. Before starting the tractor, ensure all levers are in their neutral positions, the park brake is engaged and the clutch and PTO are disengaged.
3. Do not operate or idle engine in a non-ventilated area.
4. Only tow items using the drawbar or hitch.
5. Drive at a speed to ensure control over unexpected hazards.
6. Do not operate near ditches, holes or embankments, which may collapse under the tractor's weight.

7. Always reverse when going up a steep slope. Avoid slopes that are too steep for safe operation.
8. Do not dismount from a tractor while the engine is running.
9. Ensure that no person or animal is endangered when operating the equipment.
10. Ensure bucket (if fitted) is raised above line of sight.
11. Before dismounting make sure the tractor has come to a complete stop on even ground, the park brake has been applied, the PTO has been disengaged and all control levels are in their neutral positions, the engine is turned off and the keys removed.
12. *Other safety checks?*

Housekeeping

- Clean away any foreign material, debris from in and around engine and implement parts.
- Keep the work area or implement shed in a clean and tidy condition.

Potential hazards

- ◆ Entanglement in PTO
- ◆ Noise
- ◆ Rollover

Summary of safe work procedures:

- Identify and prioritise tasks that require SWPs.
- Develop SWPs.
- Implement SWPs through training.
- Review your procedures and work tasks.
- Plan your approach to developing SWP.
- Involve your workers.
- Keep procedures up-to-date and regularly review SWPs.

Refer to T7 — Safe work procedure template

Induction, training and supervision

Employers must provide their workers with any information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety at work. Managers and supervisors should also be provided with the information, instruction and training they need to ensure the health and safety of the people under their supervision.

Induction

Induction is the best way to make new workers (young and old) aware of how the business operates, important procedures and how to manage workplace risks.

Inductions are also relevant to refresh workers moving to a new location in the business, those operating a new piece of machinery or workers who may have been on extended leave. An induction should also be given to visitors entering the workplace.

An induction checklist will help to ensure all topics are covered with each worker or visitor. Have the induction form signed and dated and store in your induction records for future reference.

An induction should:

- describe the worker's role (e.g. who to report to, tasks to be done, hours of work and pay rates)
- explain the workplace layout, such as location of facilities and first aid equipment and details of emergency plans, contact personnel and equipment
- detail the risks associated with the task or workplace
- provide details about the health and safety representative, arrangements for consulting with workers (e.g. toolbox talks) and the roles and responsibilities of key people involved in health and safety at the workplace
- outline workplace policies, general rules (e.g. housekeeping or keeping machine guards in place), specific rules (e.g. not using hazardous chemicals without first reading the safety data sheet) and reporting requirements (e.g. incidents, injuries and damaged equipment)
- include task-based training, including SWPs
- demonstrate the use of PPE and identify appropriate clothing to be worn
- cover workers' compensation insurance and the business's return to work program.

Refer to T8 — Induction checklist

Young workers

Particular attention should be given to young workers with limited experience or background in a rural environment or the type of work. They may not be confident to ask questions, so it is important to make sure they understand the job they are doing, can be adequately supervised, know how to report hazards and can freely discuss any other issues.

Young workers and those with limited English may be less likely to question health and safety practices or speak up if they are unsure. They may find it easier to communicate through a health and safety representative, an interpreter or worker representative. Information to them should be simple and clear and presented in different ways, such as using diagrams, photos, pictures and practical demonstrations to make it easier to understand.

Seasonal and labour hire workers

The responsibility of employers towards seasonal workers is the same as any workers they employ. Seasonal workers need to be adequately inducted into the workplace, trained in their jobs and closely supervised.

Although they might work on a property for only a short time, they are at a higher risk of injury due to their limited understanding of the workplace and the risks associated with the tasks. They should be treated the same as new, inexperienced workers no matter what their age.

You must also ensure that workers from non-English speaking backgrounds understand the information and training they have been given. It may be necessary to provide an interpreter or have written instructions translated into different languages or a visual aid.

Using a labour hire company

Under a labour hire arrangement, both the labour hire PCBU and the host PCBU have duties to ensure the health and safety of labour hire workers. These duties must be fulfilled to the extent to which each PCBU has the capacity to influence and control the matter.

If using a labour hire company, specify to them the tasks to be done, skills and experience needed and any special conditions, equipment to be used, licences required and appropriate clothing to be worn.

The PCBUs must consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other so far as is reasonably practicable. Duty holders under the WHS Act cannot contract out their work health and safety obligations.

Contractors

In the agricultural industry, contractors are often engaged to carry out tasks such as harvesting, mustering, spraying, fencing and pruning. You must also manage the risks to their health and safety as you would for any other worker. That includes a site-specific induction for contractors before the work begins and ensuring the work is completed safely according to agreed procedures.

Contractors will also need to be inducted to the same level as a new worker and a signed agreement should outline that they will not endanger any person by using unsafe work practices or equipment. All machinery and equipment that is brought on-site and is used, must be well maintained, with all guards in place.

Where there are shared responsibilities between the PCBU and a contractor who employs workers, they must consult, cooperate and coordinate with each other to provide a safe work environment, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The health and safety requirements of contractors are usually included in the contract documentation. They must be suitably qualified and hold the necessary licences to carry out the intended work, whether that is driving a forklift requiring a high risk work licence or needing ChemCert to spray herbicides or the like.

Training

Training will help ensure your workers can effectively do the tasks they perform and manage any emergencies or issues that could affect their health and safety. An employer needs to do more than give a worker a work procedure and request them to acknowledge they understand it and can do it. Workers should be able to demonstrate that they are competent in performing the tasks according to the set procedures.

Employers should:

- schedule specific training for workers
- keep records of training for each worker
- review and revise training provided to workers
- keep copies of licences, certificates or other evidence of formal qualifications or competencies held by workers
- evaluate the effectiveness of training given to workers.

Training should:

- be designed for the worker's level of responsibility
- take into account the background skills and knowledge of each worker
- be provided in a language and form that is easily comprehended
- be conducted by a competent person (e.g. experienced employee/manager or an outside training provider).

You should keep each worker's training records for future reference.



Supervision

Good supervisors are essential for improving productivity and maintaining safe practices. Supervision of workers will help ensure that your policies and procedures are being properly followed, and that any non-compliance is swiftly addressed and rectified. Supervisors also provide a direct communication link from the employer to the worker.

The level of supervision required will depend on the level of risk and the experience of the workers involved. High levels of supervision are necessary where inexperienced workers are expected to follow new procedures or to carry out difficult and critical tasks.

Refer to T9 — Contractor induction statement

Refer to T10 — Training register

Reporting safety

You don't need a complicated system in place for reporting hazards. A simple reporting procedure will help you identify WHS problems when they arise and address them.

Safety reporting procedures make it simpler for you and your workers to manage safety issues and stop re-occurrences of incidents and injuries. An analysis of trends may help identify safety issues that were previously unnoticed. It is important that your workers can confidently report hazards to you and know that you will try to fix the issues they report. If not, your workers will become reluctant to report problems in the future.

Incident notifications

The WHS Act sets out what sort of incidents are notifiable to Workplace Health and Safety Queensland (WHSQ). An incident is notifiable if it arises out of the conduct of a business or undertaking and results in the death, serious injury or serious illness of a person or involves a dangerous incident. Go to worksafe.qld.gov.au for more information about the definition of a serious injury or illness, or a dangerous incident.

A PCBU is required to make the notification immediately after becoming aware that a notifiable incident has occurred. Notification must be by the fastest possible means — usually by phone on 1300 362 128. The PCBU must keep a record of each notifiable incident for at least five years from the date notified to WHSQ.

A serious electrical incident or dangerous electrical event is also notifiable under the ES Act. For more information visit electricalsafety.qld.gov.au or contact the Electrical Safety Office on 1300 362 128.

Other notifications

PCBUs are required to notify Workplace Health and Safety Queensland around asbestos removal work, demolition and hazardous chemicals.

Workers' compensation and return to work

If you employ workers you must have an accident insurance policy with WorkCover Queensland to protect against claims for compensation. There are penalties if you don't have an insurance policy.

You cannot pay your own claim costs. Some employers meeting the criteria can self-insure, but the majority of employers in Queensland must insure with WorkCover Queensland. By managing your claims well, you give yourself every opportunity to pay less for the insurance. As an employer you must:

- ensure medical treatment and assessment
- record details of the work-related injury or illness
- provide the worker with relevant return to work information
- notify of an incident at the workplace by emailing a completed incident notification form or phone on 1300 362 128
- offer suitable duties (for injured workers)
- maintain accurate case notes and important details about an injured worker's rehabilitation and return to work program.

Getting back to work is good for business

Getting back to work following a workplace injury is an important step in your injured worker's recovery. Providing immediate and ongoing support to your injured workers will help their recovery, minimise disruption to their personal and work life and reduce negative impacts on your business' viability.

Activity is good for recovery, so put in place workplace policies and procedures to encourage recovery at work and improve the return to work culture. Consider what the injured worker can do, not what they can't do, and work with the injured worker, doctor and insurer to develop a suitable duties plan tailored to the individual circumstances.

Refer to T11 — Suitable duties

General information for the agriculture industry

The agricultural industry presents a wide scope of varying work activities and potential hazards, however there are practical solutions that can be adopted to control the risks.

Remote or isolated work

Work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of location, time or the nature of the work requires employers to have an effective way of keeping in contact with their workers.

For example, a single worker irrigating on a property could have a call in system through a two-way radio or phone. Remote workers may have access to an emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) or a GPS tracking system. Alternatively, they might use a 'buddy' system, but the chosen method needs to be reasonably practicable for the situation.

Managing the work environment and facilities code of practice 2011 provides details on appropriately assessing risks and determining control measures for remote and isolated work.

Hazardous manual tasks

A PCBU must manage risks to health and safety from a hazardous manual task. To manage a hazardous manual task means understanding all the relevant matters that could contribute to it. Refer to the *Hazardous manual tasks code of practice 2011*, but consider:

- postures, movements, forces and vibration performed during the task
- the duration and frequency of the task
- workplace environmental conditions
- the design of the work area and layout of the workplace
- the systems of work used
- the nature, size, weight or number of people involved in performing the task.

Common manual task injuries can be caused through tasks that involve handling and restraining livestock or uncoupling equipment. The majority of manual task injuries are through lifting and carrying loads, bending and reaching when performing tasks, repetitive bending and awkward positions, slips, trips and falls or vibration. Involve your workers when developing appropriate solutions, which could include:

- eliminating the tasks or parts of the tasks
- redesigning the work area, such as stockyards, or find a better way of doing the task
- lowering the storage height of objects
- using mechanical aids such as calf cradles, cattle crushes, tailgate loaders, trolleys, forklifts, telehandlers or tractor platforms
- using smaller sized containers or packaging to reduce heavy loads
- improving training and instructions to workers about the tasks
- ensuring workers have adequate rest breaks.

Refer to T12 — Manual tasks risk management worksheet

Facilities

A PCBU must provide adequate facilities for workers, including toilets, clean drinking water, washing facilities, management of temperature extremes (e.g. shade) and eating facilities.

For more information refer to the *Managing the work environment and facilities code of practice 2011*.

First aid and emergency procedures

A duty holder must provide access to first aid equipment and an adequate number of trained workers to administer first aid. Refer to the *First aid in the workplace code of practice 2014*.

They must also develop procedures to deal with a workplace emergency such as a fire, plan evacuation procedures, know how to notify emergency services and know how to implement and communicate the emergency procedures to workers.

It is a good idea to keep a list of the emergency phone numbers readily accessible in the office, in each vehicle and on the wall of the workshop. At a minimum, the numbers should include the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), doctors, ambulance, fire service and the Poisons Information Centre. It is also a good idea to have the GPS coordinates of the property on the list so these can be provided to a rescue aircraft or ambulance called to the property.

The emergency plan is in addition to the requirement for a fire and evacuation plan under the Building Fire Safety Regulation 2008, however both these plans can be combined into one plan for the workplace.

Refer to T13 — Emergency information list

Refer to T14 — Queensland emergency plans checklist

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

If the PCBU uses PPE to control the risk of injury they must follow the WHS Regulation which discusses the provision, selection, maintenance and information on how to use it correctly.

A worker should be trained, instructed and have information about the safe and correct use of PPE. If PPE is provided, a worker must use it as per the instructions and training.

Relying on PPE alone will not reduce the risk of an incident occurring, but it could reduce the severity of an injury. For example, a helmet could reduce the severity of a head injury to a rider of a quad bike, but it would not prevent the incident from happening.

Heat stress

Working in the sun for a long period of time without adequate breaks, shade or water can mean workers face serious dehydration and are at risk of a heat-related illness or even death.

Workplaces should weigh up all factors such as heat, humidity, water intake, breezes, protective gear, the physical condition of workers, their hours of work and available shade areas.

Once the risk factors have been identified, staff should be provided and instructed in the use of PPE, such as wide brim hats, long sleeved collared shirts, long pants, sunglasses and sunscreen, to ensure they do not put themselves or others at risk from heat stress.

Plant and machinery

A PCBU with management or control of plant must manage the risks associated with plant. That means maintenance, repair, inspection and testing must be carried out by a competent person.

Quad bikes

Quad bike incidents are one of the leading causes of injuries and deaths on farms. Workers and employers should assess the risks of operating a quad bike and use these tips:

- Consider whether a quad bike is the right tool for a particular task.
- Ensure all riders have been trained and are competent.
- Protect yourself by wearing a properly fitting helmet, eye protection, gloves, sturdy footwear and clothing that covers arms and legs.
- Reduce your speed, especially on rough or uneven ground.
- Loaded quad bikes tip on slopes. Reduce your load before you tackle steep terrain.
- Be aware of terrain which has changed due to rain or flood or obstacles that may be hidden in long grass.
- Leave attachments behind that you don't need. Towing attachments adds to the overall weight and instability of the bike.
- Take extra care when carrying liquid loads as the weight will shift when turning corners or crossing slopes making the bike unstable.
- Consider whether the installation of a crush protection device would be suitable for your situation. Make sure it meets engineering criteria.
- Never let children under 16 use an adult-sized quad bike.
- Never double passengers on a single-seat bike.
- Never overload your quad bike above the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Always keep your quad bike maintained using the manufacturer's instructions.

Tractors

PCBUs should consider each type of tractor hazard and associated risk and then choose the most appropriate control measure to ensure the health and safety of all operators.

Guards should protect the operator and others from moving parts of the tractor that could be hazardous, whether performing a normal operation or undergoing routine maintenance.

At a workplace, a tractor weighing between 560 kg and 15,000 kg must not be used unless it is securely fitted with a rollover protective structure (ROPS), regardless of whether it is new or second hand. A plate or decal confirming its compliance should be attached to the ROPS' frame, or inside the cabin.

All types of rural mobile plant are potentially at risk of roll over, including harvesters, spray rigs and earth moving equipment.

It may not be practical to work under trees (in an orchard) or in a place too low (within a building) with an approved ROPS fitted. In this situation, the ROPS may be lowered or

removed, but you should ensure your workers take due care when operating without a ROPS and that the ROPS is returned to its normal position after the height restriction is no longer applicable.

The use of canopies with ROPS and falling object protective structures (FOPS) should be considered to minimise the operator's exposure to UV radiation from sunlight.

Follow these tips:

- Never dismount from a moving tractor or adjust or work on towed implements while they are in motion.
- Do not use or attach implements unless the power take-off (PTO) shaft is guarded.
- Always start a tractor from the driver's seat, not from the ground.
- Make sure the park brake is on and operating effectively before leaving the driver's seat.
- Do not park a tractor on a steep slope.
- Remove the key when the tractor is not in use.
- Make sure all operators are trained and are competent to safely use tractors.
- Wear a seat belt where a ROPS is fitted.

Guarding

A guard is any shield, cover, casing or physical barrier that prevents contact by a person or their clothing with a moving part. Guards should be provided where any part of rural plant is within reach and that could become hazardous during operation, routine maintenance or adjustment. Guards must comply with the relevant Australian standards.

Guards are needed for:

- any rotating shaft, gear, cable, sprocket, chain, clutch, coupling, cam or fan blade
- any crushing or shearing points (e.g. augers and slide blocks, roller feeds and conveyor feeds)
- ground wheels and track gear
- any machine component which cuts, grinds, pulps, crushes, breaks or pulverises farm produce
- hot parts where the surface temperature exceeds 120°C in normal operation.

High risk work licences

Anyone carrying out high risk work, such as operating a forklift or an elevating work platform must hold a photographic renewable high risk work licence for the category of plant. This is inclusive of tractors with fitted masts, but not tractors with any forks. Employers have a responsibility to ensure their workers have the correct licence.

You can apply for a high risk work licence once you complete formal training with a registered training organisation (RTO).

Electrical safety

Powerlines

In Queensland there have been many serious electrical incidents on rural properties resulting in fatalities or hospitalisation from burns.

Landholders need to be aware of the serious electrical risks if working near overhead or underground powerlines. Powerlines in Queensland can carry high voltages up to 330,000 volts. Contact with them can result in a serious injury or death – even working close to them can result in electricity arcing over to a person, machinery or plant. Electrical incidents can also cause significant property damage.

Powerlines and power poles are notoriously difficult to see, especially in rural areas where they may be a single line. Powerlines do not follow a direct line from the top of one pole to another and can sag as much as three or four metres below the cross-arms supporting them, especially in high temperatures. Powerlines can also sway in the wind, so what appears to be a safe working distance may later expose people or property to serious risks.

Power poles should be clearly marked, the electrical entity can install flags or markers on powerlines in frequent traffic areas on your property and you should have a plan of where powerlines are located. Include information about powerline locations in your site induction or farm map for employees or contractors working on your property.

You should find out where your underground lines are located before you dig or excavate. Dial 1100 before you dig and ensure your workers and any contractors operating equipment are suitably trained.

Exclusion zones

Workers, machinery and other plant must keep a minimum safe distance from powerlines at all times as outlined below.

Power line voltage (1 kV = 1000 volts)	Examples	Exclusion zone*
Up to 132 kV	Low voltage and high voltage powerlines usually on poles	3 metres
Between 132 kV and 330 kV	High voltage powerlines usually on poles and towers	6 metres
Over 330 kV	High voltage powerlines usually on towers	8 metres

*Note the above table does not detail all exclusion zone requirements.

Safe and practical solutions

- Avoid working under or near powerlines. If you can't avoid locating plant near live powerlines, you must know the height and reach of the plant you are operating to prevent it entering the exclusion zone. Always lower machinery near powerlines.
- If possible, arrange for powerlines to be de-energised or relocated away from the work area before work starts.
- Use a safety observer on the ground to help keep plant or equipment out of the exclusion zone. Always work away from powerlines – not towards them.
- Arrange for your electricity entity to install flags or indicators on overhead lines as visual markers, or mark the position of underground electric lines and the safe exclusion zone distance before excavating.
- Know where powerlines, poles and stays are located and train your workers to do the same. Induct all workers, visitors and family members with a safety briefing.
- Establish aircraft landing strips and approach paths away from powerlines.
- Before excavation work starts, obtain the most up-to-date information from Dial Before You Dig.

Private property poles

Power poles on rural properties can be owned by an electricity distributor or privately owned. Have someone with appropriate skills and knowledge, such as a licensed electrical contractor, check private power poles on your property at least every five years for deterioration due to corrosion, rot or termites. If you suspect your power poles are unsafe, arrange for an electrical contractor to inspect them and replace unsound ones.

Never do your own electrical work

Anyone doing unlicensed electrical work is putting themselves and others at risk of electric shock.

Doing your own electrical work is illegal and can void your insurance. Installing or repairing electrical equipment or cables must only be done by a licensed electrician. Even when you think you know what you are doing, never attempt to do your own electrical work.

Safety switches

Safety switches can protect you, your family and anyone visiting the property from electric shock, but only on the circuits on which they are installed.

Property owners should consider having safety switches installed on all circuits on their property, including workshops, lights, air-conditioners, ovens, pools and hot water systems.

Safety switches are often confused with circuit breakers and fuses, but they perform different tasks. Safety switches provide personal protection against electric shock by turning off the power in a fraction of a second if a leakage of current is detected.

It's best to have safety switches (residual current devices – RCDs) installed on all circuits, but a portable safety switch will also help to reduce the risk of electric shock. Before entering a ceiling space always turn off all the main power switches at the switchboard. Tape or label the switches so someone else doesn't turn it back on while you are up there.

Hazardous chemicals

Most rural properties and chemical application contractors handle, use and store hazardous chemicals. Hazardous chemicals include fuels, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), ammonia gas, pesticides, herbicides, various acids and industrial gases.

The hazardous chemicals label, provides advice on safe handling, storage and use and information about the chemical's identity and toxicity. Chemical manufacturers are required to supply a safety data sheet (SDS) that details health and physical hazards information that is in line with the globally harmonised system of classification and labelling of chemicals (GHS). The SDS provides information on ingredients, precautions for the safe handling and use, first aid, accidental release measures, and disposal information.

Workers handling and using hazardous chemicals must be suitably trained (e.g. Auschem, Chemcert). Hazardous chemicals should be stored:

- in a well-ventilated and well-lit, lockable shed with an impervious floor and bunding, or other spill containment system to contain leaks and spills
- having containers protected from damage (e.g. impact by vehicles and machinery)
- away from respirators, protective clothing and safety equipment
- away from incompatible chemicals

- in containers with GHS compliant labels intact (if labels come off, always re-label container)
- securely to prevent unauthorised access
- with suitable fire-fighting equipment nearby.

Each workplace should identify the hazards and implement appropriate control measures to manage the risk.

- Keep a register of hazardous chemicals with their SDS readily available to workers.
- Ensure safety signage and placarding for storing hazardous chemicals is appropriate where required.
- Have an emergency services manifest for manifest quantities of hazardous chemicals.
- Ensure emergency plans include the types and quantities of hazardous chemicals.
- Remove any potential ignition sources around flammable materials.
- Ensure storage systems (e.g. tanks) are fit-for-purpose and operated and maintained in a safe manner.
- Properly decommission storage or handling systems that are no longer used.
- Train workers to know how to safely store and handle hazardous chemicals including the associated storage systems and emergency response actions.
- Provide PPE for workers and training in the correct use (e.g. respirators, gloves, chemical resistant boots).

There are requirements where businesses must notify WHSQ around certain thresholds for chemical use and storage for their business, as well as locations of abandoned underground tanks or existing pipelines with hazardous chemicals. A manifest quantity workplace must notify WHSQ and provide manifest and site plan, emergency plan to be sent to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services.

Managing agricultural chemical spray drift

Spray drift from an application of agricultural chemicals has the potential to adversely affect the health and safety of people. Applicators or the PCBU must be sure that spray drift is eliminated through good application practices, or minimised to prevent adverse health impacts.

This includes:

- monitoring and assessing prevailing weather conditions
- keeping a spray diary
- following manufacturer's recommendations on dilutions and application rates
- selecting suitable applicator/nozzles for droplet size required

- keeping spraying equipment maintained and calibrated
- maintaining correct spray height
- notifying neighbours of spraying activities
- training workers on operating spray equipment
- protecting workers from inhalation or skin exposure to hazardous chemicals.

Hazardous atmospheres

You must manage risks associated with a hazardous atmosphere. That includes when:

- the atmosphere does not have a safe oxygen level (e.g. grain respiration occurring in grain silos leading to an oxygen depleted atmosphere; or effluent pits depleted in oxygen as a result of microbial action; or use of vehicle exhaust gas to purge a tank or vessel)
- the concentration of oxygen in the atmosphere increases the fire risk (e.g. gas leak from a compressed oxygen cylinder used for welding activities in a confined area raising the oxygen concentration)
- the concentration of flammable gases, vapours, mists, or fumes exceeds five per cent of the lower explosive limit (e.g. tanks and containers containing residual fuel, or use of solvents in enclosed areas)
- combustible dust, such as wood dust, bio-solids, sugar, starch, flour, feed or grain is present in a quantity and form that would result in a hazardous area, where these dusts could divide, accumulate or be suspended in the air to create a hazardous atmosphere.
- Ensure an ignition source is not introduced into the hazardous area if there is a possibility of fire or explosion.

Refer to T15 — Hazardous chemicals risk assessment checklist

Falling objects

A PCBU must manage risks to health and safety associated with a falling object if it is likely to injure a person. That includes securing tools and equipment when working at height and ensuring no one is working directly underneath you.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk, the PCBU must minimise the risk by either providing adequate protection for workers, such as an exclusion zone, or preventing an object from falling by using a secure barrier.

Confined spaces

The PCBU must manage the risks associated with a confined space at a workplace. Specific examples of possible confined spaces include a hopper, grain silo, field bins, storage tanks (i.e. sewerage, fuel and water), wet and dry wells, manure and silage pits, integrated feed system or vats (i.e. milk, cheese or wine).

Working in a confined space has the potential to increase the risk of injury from noise, being overcome by fumes, gases or depleted oxygen, suffocation, high or low temperatures, manual handling and slips, trips and falls.

If you are working in a confined space, you must:

- be trained in working in confined spaces
- place a trained stand-by-person outside the confined space to talk to anyone in the confined space and implement emergency procedures if required
- provide PPE, rescue, first-aid and fire suppression equipment
- supplying safety harnesses and safety or rescue lines where there is a danger of falling during the ascent or descent to access the confined space
- erect signs that show entry is only permitted after signing the entry permit
- ensure the area is well ventilated.

For more information refer to the *Confined spaces code of practice 2011*.

Cutting and welding

Never cut drums that have contained flammable or combustible liquids or gases. Anyone who cuts or welds metal should have a good understanding of the risks associated with the task.

Drums that contain residual flammable or combustible substances or vapours may explode when exposed to heat. Additionally, drums that have contained substances such as pesticides may release hazardous gases when exposed to heat. Even drums that have been empty for a very long time can contain enough residue substances to explode and/or emit hazardous gas when exposed to heat.

Noise

Employers must protect themselves and their workers from exposure to excessive noise. To do this, you must assess whether noisy activities present a potential risk.

The table below shows the upper noise levels from different farming machinery activities and the allowable exposure times without hearing protection. Noise is excessive where it exceeds the exposure standard of 85 dB(A), averaged over an eight hour period or where a peak noise level of 140 dB (C) occurs.

Typical noise levels from machinery and operations

Levels dB(A)	Farming machinery or operation	Maximum time
80	Tractor idling	No limit
85	Working tractor with an enclosed cab	8 hours
90	Shearing shed	2 hrs 30 min
90	Chainsaw idling	2 hrs 30 min
95	Angle grinder	48 min
95	Grain auger	48 min
95	Header	48 min
100	Tractor operating under load without a cab	15 min
100	Orchard sprayer	15 min
105	Pig shed at feeding time	4.5 min
120	Chainsaw cutting	8 seconds
140	Aircraft at 15 m	No safe exposure
140 dB(C)	Shotguns/rifles and other firearms far exceed the 140 dB limit	No safe limit: <i>Instantaneous damage</i>

Falls

Falls by a person from one level to another must also be managed if it is reasonably likely to cause injury to anyone.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risk of a fall, then the duty holder must minimise the risk of a fall by providing adequate protection against the risk.

Refer to *Managing the risk of falls at workplaces code of practice 2011* for more information.

Animal handling

To provide a safe workplace, livestock handling facilities should be well designed and functional from both an animal handling perspective and workers' safety.

- Design and position stockyards and loading facilities using best practice design.
- Ensure the stockyards are suitable for the mob size.
- Separate people and animals wherever possible by having raised walkways and externally operated cattle crushes and gates.
- Install gates that can be closed and secured easily.

- Ensure livestock handlers have a good working knowledge of animal behaviour and temperament.
- Keep stockyards maintained, clear of muck and debris and control excessive dust.
- Make watering and feed points easily accessible.

Zoonotic diseases

Good hygiene of workers is one way to reduce the risk from zoonotic diseases. Most of them are spread by people coming in contact with the bodily fluids and excrement of animals. Where it is reasonably practicable to assume that a worker is at risk of contact with an animal that may carry Q Fever, the worker should be tested and immunised. Animals that pose a risk of Q Fever are cattle, sheep, goats and kangaroos.

For more information on zoonoses, such as Hendra virus, visit worksafe.qld.gov.au.

Asbestos

Materials that contain asbestos can be found in buildings, workplaces and dwellings built before 1990. Asbestos can also be found in a variety of building products and friction materials (e.g. cement sheeting or brake disc pads).

A person with management or control of a workplace must ensure asbestos at the workplace has been identified, is clearly indicated and recorded in a register and there is a written asbestos management plan (if asbestos has been identified or is likely to be there).

An asbestos register is not required if the building was constructed after 31 December 1989, no asbestos has been identified at the workplace and it is not likely to be present.

An asbestos register must be maintained so it is up to date and readily accessible, but it is not required for on-farm domestic dwellings such as homesteads, cottages, shearer's huts or other worker accommodation. Even cottages rented out privately do not need an asbestos register.

An asbestos management plan helps people with management and control of buildings and other relevant structures to prevent exposure to airborne asbestos fibres by their staff and site visitors. They must take reasonable steps to label and record asbestos, inform everyone on the premises where asbestos is present, outline the consequences of exposure to asbestos and implement appropriate control measures. The plan should set out clear aims, stating what, when and how it is going to be done.

The WHS Regulation also requires an asbestos management plan where naturally occurring asbestos is identified or likely to be present at a workplace. Two codes of practice that provide guidance on how to manage, control and safely remove asbestos in the workplace are: *How to manage asbestos in the workplace code of practice 2011* and *How to safely remove asbestos code of practice 2011*.

An asbestos licence is required for work to remove any amount of friable asbestos or more than ten square metres of non-friable (bonded) asbestos. The removal of ten square metres or less of non-friable (bonded) asbestos does not require a licence, but it should only be done by someone with adequate knowledge, experience and skill to perform the task safely.

For more information visit qld.gov.au/asbestos or call 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

Safety of children on farms

Water hazards including dips, dams and troughs are quite often close to the house and are accessible to children. If you have children on your property, consider building safe play areas and adequately supervise young children.

For more information and resources on child farm safety, head to the Farmsafe Australia website at farmsafe.org.au. The *Children and young workers code of practice 2006* provides practical guidance on how to keep children and young workers safe.

Creating healthy workplaces to strengthen your business

Queenslanders who live in rural and remote areas generally have higher rates of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers compared to those who live in urban centres. By addressing chronic disease risks within the workplace setting, employers can positively impact worker productivity and performance as well as the health and wellbeing of employees, their families and the community.

The risk factors include: smoking, poor nutrition, harmful alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, obesity and poor mental health. Incorporating work health initiatives into existing health and safety systems can reduce absenteeism, injuries and enhance workforce morale.

Healthy workplaces provide a physical and cultural workplace environment that supports workers to make the healthy choice and builds their knowledge and skills in choosing healthy lifestyle behaviours.

The *Live Well Farm Well guide*, available at worksafe.qld.gov.au is designed to assist farmers take steps to improve the health and wellbeing of workers while they are at work.

Notes

Templates on CD

- T1 Sample Health, safety and wellbeing policy
- T2 Management commitment checklist
- T3 Record of staff toolbox meeting
- T4 Risk assessment form
- T5 Risk register template
- T6 Task analysis template
- T7.1 Safe work procedure template
- T7.2 Safe work procedure template
- T7.3 Safe work procedure template
- T8 Induction checklist
- T9 Contractor induction statement
- T10 Training register
- T11 Suitable duties
- T12 Manual tasks risk management worksheet
- T13 Emergency information list
- T14 Queensland emergency plans checklist
- T15 Hazardous chemicals risk assessment checklist

