

Workplace Hazards in Construction

This fact sheet is for school students undertaking workplacement programs, and for their host employers. It can be used as a tool to assist with task planning, and to develop appropriate induction, training and supervision to minimise any risk to students while they are 'at work'.

Students must be given instruction, and must be supervised at all times. Consideration must always be given to hazards when allocating tasks. If any risk exists, that cannot be appropriately managed, students must NOT undertake the activity.

Hazard	Possible Harmful Effects	Possible Employer Action to Prevent Injury / Illness	Preventative Action Students Can Take
Powered tools and non-powered tools including jackhammers, boltcutters, hand-held cutting saw	Exhaust fumes Contact with electrical conductors Contact with cutting blades could result in laceration or amputation Part of equipment breaking up, ejection of material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide instruction in the safe use of hand tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use hand tools carefully, according to instructions
Working at heights Climbing on heavy construction equipment Excavation	Falls from heights – potential for fatality or serious injury Collapse of trenches can result in crushing, asphyxiation	Students must NOT work at heights or where there is any risk of a fall	Students must NOT work at heights or where there is any risk of a fall
Mobile plant including mobile platforms, moving traffic (trucks and other vehicles)	Falls from heights – potential for fatality or serious injury Being struck by vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Put in place appropriate signage including physical barriers ◆ Provide appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), including high visibility vest 	Students must NOT operate mobile plant
Unlevelled terrain	Falls Cuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Place appropriate safety signs ◆ Require appropriate PPE including safety footwear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Observe safety signs ◆ Wear PPE including safety footwear
Cement products, hazardous substances	Dermatitis Burns, including abrasive effects of sand (fresh concrete also has a caustic effect, due to its alkaline nature) Dust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assess the work area before commencing work ◆ Provide Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) and risk assessments for hazardous substances ◆ Provide appropriate PPE ◆ Provide emergency eye wash facility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Read MSDS and follow safe working instructions ◆ Use PPE provided to protect you against hazardous substances
Manual handling (bending, reaching, stretching, pulling, lifting, repetitive motions, awkward posture)	Musculoskeletal disorders including sprains and strains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Document safe work procedures ◆ Provide mechanical aids ◆ Provide training in safe manual handling techniques ◆ Encourage team lifts where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Use mechanical aids provided ◆ Seek help when you think a team lift is required ◆ Exercise: warm up/stretch before starting work, and cool down/stretch at end of the shift or working day
Noise and vibration	Long-term exposure to excessive noise could lead to deafness Musculoskeletal disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Document safe work procedures ◆ Maintain powered tools to reduce noise ◆ Limit noise exposures ◆ Provide appropriate PPE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Follow safe work procedures ◆ Wear PPE (hearing protection) provided
Heat, or cold/wet weather conditions Fatigue	Heat rashes, cramps, heat stress, dehydration, sunburn, numbness, frostbite, hypothermia Long-term exposure to UV radiation can lead to cataracts, skin cancers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide regular rest breaks ◆ Provide shade where practicable ◆ Re-schedule work if extreme weather conditions present risk ◆ Provide water in hot weather ◆ Provide appropriate clothing / PPE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Rest and/or seek assistance if you feel that heat or cold may be adversely affecting you ◆ Wear appropriate clothing and take regular rest breaks
Inadequate amenities, eg drinking water, toilets, washing facilities	Poor hygiene could result in illnesses, spread of infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Provide and maintain appropriate amenities ◆ Encourage good hygiene practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Practice good hygiene – use amenities provided
Sexual harassment, work place bullying	Emotional stress, fear and anxiety, physical illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Establish work place policy ◆ Provide staff briefings or training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Report any concerns immediately

Note: This document is a guide only, as each workplace will have its own individual hazards.