**FOLLOWING WHS GUIDELINES**

**Learners Guide**

**South Metropolitan TAFE**

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INTRODUCTION TO WHS

## WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY & OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

**Work Health and Safety (WHS) and Occupational Safety & Health (OSH)** are the terms that refer to the same thing – a set of laws and processes that help protect employees from harm while at work.

The reason why two different terms are used is because of the current laws that apply across Australia. You will learn about this difference in the next section of this guide.

**WHS Statistics**

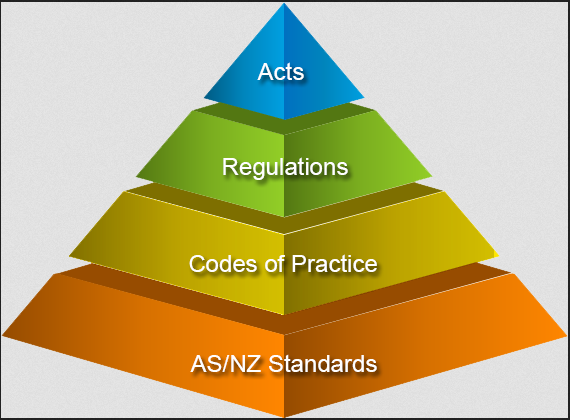
Did you know that in 2017, 191 were fatally injured in the workplace, and 106,260 serious injury claims were made in 2016-2017 resulting in billions of dollars in compensation claims? You can find some key work health and safety statistics information from the following links:

* [Work-related injury fatalities – Key WHS statistics Australia 2018 (Safe Work Australia)](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/work-related-injury-fatalities-key-whs-statistics-australia-2018)
* [Work-related injury and disease – Key WHS statistics Australia 2018 (Safe Work Australia)](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/work-related-injury-and-disease-key-whs-statistics-australia-2018)
* [Costs of work-related injuries and diseases - Key WHS statistics Australia 2018 (Safe Work Australia)](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/book/costs-work-related-injuries-and-diseases-key-whs-statistics-australia-2018)

In the past 10 years however a number of injuries, fatalities and compensation have been gradually decreasing so a number of fatalities have dropped almost by half and a number of serious injuries went down by 27%. This is largely because the Work Health and Safety laws becoming a mandatory part of a day to day work rather than an optional measure.

Back in 1900s safety was not a priority and workers were almost expected to make sacrifices for the sake of production and getting things done. The safety culture has been evolving gradually starting from introduction of safety gear in 1940s and 1950s (masks, glasses, gloves and aprons) to implementation of targeted safety campaigns in 1950s (“no smoking” and “safety around machinery”) and to communication of safety information and implementation of risk controls and breach penalties in the past century. ([Full Circle: A work health and safety evolution](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/full-circle-work-health-and-safety-evolution))

## WHS LEGISLATIONS, CODES OF PRACTICES AND STANDARDS



You must make sure you get familiar with the laws, and WHS policies and procedures in your organisation. If you don’t meet your legal obligations under the OSH Act and Regulations (or WHS Act and Regulations), you may be putting your and other people’s health and wellbeing at risk; you may also be breaking a law which usually results in hefty penalties and fines.

**Current WHS laws across Australia**

In Australia, WHS is regulated through the WHS legislation. All states except for Western Australia and Victoria have adopted the harmonised WHS laws developed by Safe Work Australia:

* [WHS Act 2011](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2017C00305)
* [WHS Regulations 2011](https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2011L02664)
* [Model Codes of Practices](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources_publications/model-codes-of-practice)

**Current WHS laws in Western Australia**

In Western Australia, WHS is regulated through the OSH legislation:

* [Occupational Safety & Health Act 1984](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/about-occupational-safety-and-health-act-1984)
* [Occupational Safety & Health Regulations 1996](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/about-occupational-safety-and-health-regulations-1996)
* [Approved Codes of Practices](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/approved-codes-practice)

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| **NOTE**  A harmonised legislation similar to WHS Act and Regulations has been proposed to be adopted in Western Australia in 2014, but the decision has not yet been finalised.   * [Work Health and Safety Bill 2014](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/publications/work-health-and-safety-bill-2014) (This is a Western Australian version of the WHS Act that fits in with the WA’s work environment. Still under review) |

### WHS/OSH ACTS:

* **Act** contains the general rules on making workplaces safe and healthy.
* Includes information about general legal responsibilities on specific persons or parties (Employers, employees, manufacturers, designers, suppliers etc.) and provides some legal information regarding breaches, penalties and disputes.

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| Example:  Occupational Safety & Health Act (Part II, Section 20 – Duties of Employees)   1. an employee shall take reasonable care – 2. to ensure his or her own safety and health at work; and 3. to avoid adversely affecting the safety or health of any other person through any act or omission at work |

### WHS/OSH REGULATIONS:

* **Regulations** outline general duties as well, but in this case the duties applicable to specific situations or hazards within the workplaces (Manual handling, Working with heavy machinery, working at heights etc.).
* Additionally this document provides some information about licensing(certifications), record keeping and reporting requirements.

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| Example:  Occupational Safety & Health Regulations (Part 3, Section 3.17 – Cleanliness of workplace…)   1. person who, at a workplace, is an employer, the main contractor, a self-employed person or a person having control of the workplace must ensure that — 2. the workplace and other areas ancillary to the workplace are maintained in such clean condition as is necessary to avoid hazards to persons at the workplace; and 3. where practicable, rubbish and debris are removed by mechanical means; and |

### CODES OF PRACTICES:

* **Codes of Practices** are a set of documents developed by WHS Authorities to provide specific advice and recommendations about how to meet the requirements set in Acts and Regulations.
* Codes of Practices are not legally enforceable by themselves but they can be used as evidence to show that organisation does or does not comply with the law.

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| Example:  Model Code of Practice for Managing the Work Environment and Facilities   * This Code of Practice provides advice on how to maintain a risk-free, safe and healthy physical work environment; * Outlines the requirements for the physical work environment and welfare facilities, provides guidance for specific types of work and explains how to prepare emergency procedures. |

### AS/NZ STANDARDS:

* **Australian/New Zealand and International Standards** are standards of quality control and apply to nearly everything from meat pies to windows (panes of glass on busses have the Standards Australia logo on them, showing they passed the quality check).
* These standards are necessary to ensure that any risk control measures, processes or equipment used are consistent and reliable.

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| Example:  National Standard for Occupational Noise   * This standard provides the requirements applicable to acceptable levels of noise in places of work with consideration to Sound volume, sound pressure level, and amounts of acceptable exposure. |

## WHERE TO FIND WHS INFORMATION

Relevant WHS information can be found both within the organisation you are working for and outside of it. This is referred to as Internal and External sources of information.

### EXTERNAL SOURCES

The best and most reliable external source of WHS information is from the WHS Authorities in Australia. Additionally you may find information from the organisations specialising in Work Health and Safety.

**National WHS Authorities**

WorkSafe Australia

* Workplace Safety Australia was created in the year 2000 and is a leading National WHS advisory and information provider to Australian companies.
  + Provides services such as work health and safety consultation, training and auditing, and paid subscription based access to various WHS relevant resources.
* Website: [www.worksafe.com.au](http://www.worksafe.com.au)

Safe Work Australia

* Safe Work Australia began in November 2009 and operates as an independent statutory agency with primary responsibility to improve work health and safety and workers’ compensation arrangements across Australia.
  + National WHS Authority that leads the development of national WHS policies and strategies to improve safety in the workplaces, undertake research and report the data.
* Website: [www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au](http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)

**State WHS Authorities**

WorkSafe WA

* WorkSafe is a state Western Australian government agency responsible for administration of the OSH Act 1984 and OSH Regulations 1996.
* This authority helps resolve WHS issues in WA workplaces and conducts workplace compliance inspections
* Website: [www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe](https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe)

**Other external sources**

Additional information can be found in professional journals and articles, newsletters originating from the WHS authorities, Industry and Trade unions, other organisations involved in work health and safety.

* [www.oshrep.org.au](http://www.oshrep.org.au)
  + Online resource for Safety and Health Representatives. Provides information, advice and a variety of useful tools and resources.
* [www.workplaceosh.com.au](http://www.workplaceosh.com.au)
  + Online resource for Australia business owners. Provides WHS managers and other professionals with the latest news, tools and expert guidance regarding whs matters.
* [www.smartmove.safetyline.wa.gov.au](http://www.smartmove.safetyline.wa.gov.au)
  + Online resource for senior high school students and young professionals entering the workforce. Provides educational resources and other useful information regarding work health and safety.

### INTERNAL SOURCES

WHS information inside of the organisation can generally be found from the documentation and from people.

Documentation:

* WHS policy and safety procedures
* Guidance materials and manuals
* Instructions
* Incident, accident, hazard reports
* WHS newsletters

People:

* Safety and Health Representatives
* Members of a Safety and Health Committee
* Organisations working in high risk environments would normally have a whole organisational department dedicated to managing work health and safety
* Senior staff, managers and team leaders

## ENSURING SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Working in the office is much safer than working on a mining or a construction site, there are however still risks that need to be reviewed and addressed. Below you can find a link to a document that can help you with this process.

[Guidance note for the prevention of Occupational Overuse Syndrome in keyboard employment](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/system/files/documents/1702/guidancenote_preventionofoccupationaloverusesyndromeinkeyboardemployment_nohsc3005-1996_pdf.pdf)

This document discusses the prevention strategies and provides guidelines to minimise the risk of the Occupational Overuse Syndrome occurring in workers involved in sedentary work at a desk.

### ACTIVITY

1. Read the Guidelines and discuss the following
   1. What is an Occupational Overuse Syndrome (also known as Repetitive Strain Injury - RSI)?
   2. What prevention strategies does this document recommend?
   3. Use the checklist included on the next page to inspect your workstation
   4. Make adjustments to your workstation or request assistance with your supervisor (lecturer) to resolve any practices that you found to be unsafe.

### WORKSTATION ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WORK ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
| Does the user have a variety of tasks? |  |  |  |
| If YES, does the user have some control over the order in which they are done? |  |  |  |
| Is care taken to avoid placing the user under pressure to meet demanding work targets or deadlines? |  |  |  |
| Have work pauses been taken as appropriate? |  |  |  |
| Is the work area around the user safe and free of hazards/obstructions? |  |  |  |
| Does the user find the lighting satisfactory? (Ask about glare, reflection and the ability to read documents.) |  |  |  |
| Does the user find the noise level conducive to concentration? |  |  |  |
| Does the user find the temperature and airflow in the room comfortable? |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WORKSTATION ADJUSTMENT | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
| Is the chair easily adjusted from a seated position? |  |  |  |
| Can the user get close to the workstation without impediment?  *(Check that the desktop is thin, chair arms are not in the way and there is clear leg room.)* |  |  |  |
| Is the seat height adjustable? |  |  |  |
| Is the backrest height adjustable? |  |  |  |
| Is the backrest angle adjustable? |  |  |  |
| Are the user’s forearms parallel with the floor or angled slightly downward? *(This can be achieved by lowering the desk to suit the user, or, with a fixed-height desk, raising the chair.)* |  |  |  |
| Is the desk height appropriate for the user *(or If applicable)* Is the desk height adjustable? |  |  |  |
| If YES, is the adjustment easily operated? |  |  |  |
| If NO, has the user been provided with a footrest? |  |  |  |
| Is the footrest large enough to support both feet and allow a change of position? |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| WORKSTATION LAYOUT | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
| Is the keyboard detached from the screen to ensure a comfortable working position? |  |  |  |
| Is the keyboard thin enough for comfortable positioning of the arms? |  |  |  |
| Are all often-used items within easy reach? (They should be within normal arm reach with minimum trunk movement.) |  |  |  |
| Is the workstation designed to prevent undue twisting of the neck or trunk? |  |  |  |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SCREEN AND DOCUMENTS | YES | NO | COMMENTS |
| Are all source documents legible? |  |  |  |
| Is a document holder provided and does it support all source documents adequately? *(if applicable)* |  |  |  |
| When sitting upright and looking straight ahead, is the user looking at the top edge of the screen? |  |  |  |
| Is the screen at a comfortable reading distance? |  |  |  |
| Are all characters in the display easily legible and is the image stable? |  |  |  |
| Can the position and contrast of the screen be adjusted by the user? |  |  |  |