

## Airborne contaminants

# New Australian workplace exposure limits

Work processes can release dusts, gases, fumes, vapours, or mists into the air. These are known as airborne contaminants, and they may pose a risk to work health and safety (WHS).

Employers have a WHS duty to ensure their workers are not exposed to harmful airborne contaminants.

Many airborne contaminants cannot be seen or smelled, yet they still may be present at harmful levels and cause serious health issues for workers, including occupational lung disease.

### Australia is transitioning to the **Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL)**

Following a national review, WHS ministers have endorsed replacing the Workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants list with the **Workplace exposure limits for airborne contaminants (WEL list)**, including updating the limits for some chemicals.

Australia is currently preparing to transition to the WEL list, which will take effect on **1 December 2026**.

### Employers must continue to comply with the **Workplace Exposure Standards (WES)** until **1 December 2026**

Employers must ensure that no person at their workplace is exposed to a substance or mixture in an airborne concentration exceeding that workplace exposure standard. You can do this by:

- 1. Eliminating** the risks from airborne contaminants where possible.
- 2. Minimising the risk of exposure** as much as possible if it cannot be eliminated.



Visit our airborne contaminants hub for more information  
[swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants](https://swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants)