



How to manage the risks from airborne contaminants that can cause harm to agricultural workers

Working on a farm can be dusty and can involve handling chemicals for pesticide control, crop fertilisation and livestock care. Workers can be harmed from airborne contaminants such as dusts, fumes, gases, mists, or vapours.

As the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), you need to observe your workplace to identify the hazards and assess the risks. Once you have done this, it is important to control the risks and take actions to eliminate or minimise them as much as you reasonably can.

Use this checklist to help control the risks that cause harm to agricultural workers.

Elimination

Yes No

 **The most effective control measure is to eliminate the hazard and associated risk.**

Can you prevent the generation of airborne contaminants in your workplace?

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It is not always possible to eliminate the generation of dusts, gases, fumes, mists, and vapours. If this is the case, you should work through the hierarchy of control measures below.

Substitution

Yes No

 **Substitution controls rely on replacing the hazard with something that is safer for your workers.**

Can you replace materials with something that is less hazardous?

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For example, can you:

- substitute high toxicity chemicals with lower toxicity chemicals?
- substitute dusty herbicides or fertilizers with less dusty, granular or liquid formulations?

Isolation

Yes No

 **Isolation controls rely on physically separating the hazard or source of harm from workers by distance or using barriers.**

Can you place a barrier between a hazard and your workers?

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For example, can you use tractors or vehicles that have an enclosed cabin and keep the doors and windows closed when doing dusty work?

Can you create distance between a hazardous work practice and workers?

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For example, can you use or prepare chemicals in a restricted area, away from other workers?



For more information, read '[How to manage the risks from airborne contaminants that can cause harm to agricultural workers - information sheet](https://www.swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants)' at [swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants](https://www.swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants).

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Engineering

Yes No

Engineering controls rely on introducing a physical control measure such as a mechanical device or process to reduce exposure to harm.

Can you use physical devices to reduce the level of airborne contaminants that are created and/or capture them or move them away from a worker?

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For example, can you:

- install local exhaust ventilation systems?
- use nozzles that limit the spray direction of chemicals?

Do you clean up dusts after they are created with an industrial vacuum cleaner with appropriate filtration?

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Administrative

Yes No

Administrative controls rely on your workers understanding and following workplace policies. They should only be used in combination with substitution, isolation and engineering controls.

Do you have policies to support safe work practices and worker behaviour at your workplace?

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For example, shift rotations so workers aren't in an exposure area too long or a laundry service for dusty or contaminated work clothing?

Are there designated change areas for workers to change out of their work clothes and remove personal protective equipment (PPE)?

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Does your workplace have policies for storing, cleaning and maintaining PPE?

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Can you install signs to alert your workers to a hazard?

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Do you keep your workplace clean?

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Have you provided appropriate training for all the control measures you have implemented?

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Personal protective equipment (PPE)

Yes No

PPE should be considered last after other control measures. It should not be relied on as the sole control measure for a risk. It is important your workers are trained in how to fit and properly wear PPE.

Do your workers need PPE to complement the other control measures at your workplace?

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Have you checked the PPE that you provide is the most appropriate for the risk and fits the worker who will be wearing it?

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Have you had your workers' respiratory protective equipment (RPE) fit tested by a competent person if applicable?

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Are you providing ongoing training, information, and instructions on how to use, clean, store and maintain PPE and RPE and are cartridges and filters changed regularly?

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Contact your WHS regulator

Yes No

Have you looked for guidance on your WHS regulator's website?

Your [WHS regulator](#) is responsible for regulating and enforcing WHS laws in their jurisdiction. Contact them if you have any questions specific to your workplace.

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