



WHS notifications: Incidents, extended absences and suicides

This fact sheet provides information about notification duties under the model work health and safety (WHS) laws.

For more comprehensive information and real-world scenarios, please see the [Handbook: Notifiable incidents, extended absences and suicides](#).

i The model WHS Act was updated in 2025. Changes to notification requirements only apply if adopted under local WHS laws. Please check with your WHS regulator before making changes to your notification systems or reporting practices.

Content advice: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing.



What must be notified to the WHS regulator?

You must notify the WHS regulator about:

- ✓ A death, serious injury or illness, a dangerous incident or a violent incident (**notifiable incident**).
- ✓ A worker being absent from work for 15 or more days because of a work-related injury or illness (**notifiable extended absence**).
- ✓ A work-related suicide or attempted suicide (**notifiable suicide or attempted suicide**).

Notifiable incidents

Notifiable incidents are the death of a person, serious injury or illness of a person, a dangerous incident or a violent incident arising from the conduct of a business or undertaking (e.g. related to the work, work environment or things at the workplace).

Death of a person

This includes the death of a worker or other person (e.g. a contractor or member of the public) if there is a causal link to work. If a death is due to a non work-related medical condition, it does not need to be notified to the WHS regulator.

Serious injury or illness

These are:

- Injuries and illnesses which require hospital admission as an in-patient, including if the person should have been admitted but treatment was not available or sought (e.g. due to a remote location, cultural reasons).
- Injuries and illnesses which require immediate treatment (including if treatment was not available or sought) for:
 - a serious: eye injury, burn, laceration (cuts), crush injury, or bone fracture
 - the amputation of a body part or loss of a bodily function
 - separation of skin from tissue (e.g. scalping, degloving)
 - a spinal injury
 - a pelvis, skull or facial bone fracture.
- Injuries or illnesses that require (or would usually require) treatment from a doctor, nurse or paramedic within 48 hours of exposure to a substance.
- Prescribed illnesses under the model WHS regulations including:
 - infections to which the carrying out of work is a significant contributing factor, including those which are reliably attributable to work, and
 - occupational zoonoses contracted through work involving animals or animal products (Q fever, anthrax, leptospirosis, brucellosis, Hendra virus, avian influenza and psittacosis).
- Serious brain injuries from a single or repeated blows, knocks or shocks to the head.

WHS notifications: Incidents, extended absences and suicides**Dangerous incidents**

These are incidents that immediately or imminently expose a person to a serious risk to health or safety from:

- Uncontrolled escape, spillage or leakage of a substance.
- Uncontrolled fire, implosion, explosion, electrical or arc flash explosion, or an electric shock.
- Uncontrolled escape of gas, steam or a pressurised substance.
- Fall or release of a thing from a height.
- Collapse, overturn, failure or malfunction of (or damage to) plant that is required to be authorised for use under the regulations.
- Collapse or failure of an excavation or any shoring supporting an excavation.
- Inrush of water, mud or gas in workings, or the interruption of the main system of ventilation, in an underground excavation or tunnel.
- Serious fall of a person from one level to a lower level, into a hole, trench, pit, void or body of water, or onto a dangerous surface or object.
- Mobile plant (including unpowered) which overturns or partially overturns, collides with something, pins a person or ejects someone, malfunctions or moves without control of the operator (e.g. roll-aways).

Notification is required even if no one was harmed.

Violent incidents

Violent incidents must be notified if they expose a person to a serious risk of psychological harm (even if no physical injury occurred). This includes:

- Sexual assault (including suspected sexual assault).
- Physical assault (including with bodily fluids).
- Deliberate deprivation of a person's liberty (without lawful authority).
- Threats of violence where the person has the intent and means to carry out the threat.

Notifiable extended absence

Persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) must notify a worker's absence of 15 or more consecutive calendar days due to a work-related physical or psychological injury or illness.

This includes anticipated absences based on a medical practitioner's opinion.

Notifying a worker's extended absence is separate from workers' compensation processes.

Notifiable suicide or attempted suicide**Suicide or attempted suicide of a worker (including suspected)**

PCBUs must notify the WHS regulator as soon as they become aware of a worker's death by suicide or an attempted suicide (or suspected suicide or attempted suicide) where it is linked to work.

Indicators that a suicide or attempted suicide is linked to work include:

- It occurs while working, or when the worker would ordinarily be working (e.g. the worker is not on leave).
- It occurred at or very close to the workplace.
- It occurred in work accommodation.
- It occurred while wearing their work uniform, when the person would not ordinarily wear it.
- Lethal means were accessed through work.
- The worker experienced work-related psychological harm.
- The worker has been exposed to frequent, prolonged or severe psychosocial hazards because of work.
- There is other information suggesting a link to work (e.g. comments or communications from the worker).

Suicide or attempted suicide may occur away from the workplace and still be work-related (e.g. a suicide in the worker's home or public place).

Making enquiries and protecting privacy

PCBUs must make a judgement on whether to notify the WHS regulator based on the information available. Do not wait for police or coronial investigations. If in doubt, seek advice from the WHS regulator.

PCBUs should not investigate the personal circumstances of the individual involved (e.g. seeking information from the worker, their family or others about intent, medical history or other private matters). Treat these incidents with the utmost sensitivity and confidentiality.

Suicide or attempted suicide of an 'other person' at a workplace

The suicide or attempted suicide of an 'other person' (non-worker) at a workplace must be notified in situations where:

1. the suicide is a reasonably foreseeable risk due to the nature of the workplace (e.g. mental health unit, custodial setting), *and*
2. there are one or more physical hazards at the workplace that could be used in a suicide (e.g. access to lethal means like a high jumping point or dangerous substances).

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What to do when a notifiable incident, extended absence or suicide occurs

✔ **Prioritise health and safety**

Provide first aid or emergency medical care. Manage immediate risks to others.

✔ **Notify the WHS regulator**

Immediately notify the WHS regulator by phone, email or online form (available 24/7). Tell the WHS regulator:

- What happened (e.g. death, injury, illness).
- When and where it happened.
- Who was affected.
- Treatment provided.
- Actions taken at the site.

For sexual assault incidents, do not include identifying information about the victim.

Notification is only required once in relation to the same event or set of circumstances.

✔ **Notification timing**

Report a notifiable incident, notifiable suicide or attempted suicide immediately after becoming aware it has happened, by the fastest possible means.

Report a notifiable extended absence to the WHS regulator within 14 days of becoming aware of the extended absence.

✔ **Notify other duty holders**

PCBUs and persons with management or control of the workplace must notify each other.

Consult, cooperate and coordinate with other PCBUs at the workplace to ensure timely and accurate notification.

✔ **Preserve the site and evidence**

The person with management or control of the workplace must not disturb the site, so far as is reasonably practicable, until released by an inspector. However, this does not prevent actions to assist an injured person, remove a deceased person, make the site safe, or assist police.

The person with management or control of the workplace must preserve the site and evidence so far as is reasonably practicable.

✔ **Coordinate with other authorities**

Other authorities may also need to be notified separately about a notifiable incident, notifiable extended absence or notifiable suicide. These requirements are not covered in this fact sheet.

Notifying police or other agencies does not replace the duty to notify the WHS regulator. PCBUs must cooperate with investigations.

✔ **Support affected persons**

Communicate clearly and sensitively with those involved and provide access to support services (e.g. counselling, EAP). Maintain confidentiality and privacy. Seek advice from a legal professional or the WHS regulator if unsure about what information can be collected or shared.

✔ **Keep records**

PCBUs must keep a record of each notifiable incident, notifiable extended absence or notifiable suicide for at least 5 years from the day that notification was made to the WHS regulator.



For further information and detailed information including examples of what is and is not notifiable, see the *Notifiable incidents, extended absences and suicides handbook* on the Safe Work Australia website:

www.swa.gov.au/incident-notification.

Contact your WHS regulator for advice.