WES WEL

New workplace exposure limits are coming

Are you ready?

safe work australia | Stakeholder pack | June 2026

Contents

1 Key messages

Here are some key messages you can share with your stakeholders or workers.

- In April 2024, Safe Work Australia announced that Commonwealth, state and territory work health and safety (WHS) ministers had agreed to new workplace exposure limits (WEL) for airborne contaminants.
- The new workplace exposure limits come into effect on 1 December 2026.
- Employers must continue to comply with the current workplace exposure standards for airborne contaminants (WES) list until the workplace exposure limits come into effect.
- As an employer, you should start preparing for the transition to the new workplace exposure limits by understanding your WHS duties, including when to undertake air and health monitoring, consult with workers, review safety data sheets, and when to engage an occupational hygienist.
- Visit Safe Work Australia's Airborne Contaminants Hub for resources and guidance to help you understand your WHS duties and prepare for the transition to the WEL on 1 December 2026.

Click here to download the social media assets

2 Social media assets

Our 3 downloadable social media assets tell employers, WHS professionals and other technical experts, and workers, how they can find information to help them prepare for workplace exposure limits coming into effect on 1 December 2026.

Aimed at: Employers

Can be shared by: WHS professionals, technical experts, industry bodies

Aimed at: WHS professionals and technical experts

Can be shared by: WHS regulators, unions, industry bodies

Aimed at: Workers

Can be shared by: Employers, unions, industry associations

Aimed at: Employers

Can be shared by: WHS professionals, technical experts, industry bodies

Click here to download this social media asset

2

Social media assets

Employers

This social media tile is aimed at employers and can be shared by WHS professionals and technical experts, WHS regulators, unions, industry bodies and others.

Suggested caption:

On 1 December 2026, the workplace exposure standards (WES) for airborne contaminants will be replaced with workplace exposure limits (WEL).

As an employer, you need to be ready for the change! That means:

- understanding your WHS duties, including how to eliminate or minimise the risk of exposure to airborne contaminants
- talking with workers
- revising safety data sheets
- engaging an occupational hygienist if needed.

Get prepared – visit Safe Work Australia's airborne contaminants hub: www.swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants

Aimed at: WHS professionals and technical experts

Can be shared by: WHS regulators, unions, industry bodies

Click here to download this social media asset

2

Social media assets

WHS professionals and technical experts

This social media tile is aimed at WHS professionals and technical experts and can be shared by WHS regulators, unions, industry bodies and others.

Suggested caption:

Are you a work health and safety practitioner, or an occupational hygienist?

In addition to resources for employers and workers, Safe Work Australia's airborne contaminants hub also has information aimed at occupational hygienists and other technical WHS practitioners who help businesses manage risks from airborne contaminants.

The hub includes a comparative document on the technical changes that will take effect from 1 December 2026 when workplace exposure limits (WEL) replace the workplace exposure standards (WES).

Visit the hub: www.swa.gov.au/airborne-contaminants

Aimed at: Workers

Can be shared by: Employers, unions, industry associations

Click here to download this social media asset

2

Social media assets

Workers

This social media tile is aimed at workers in industries with work processes that create airborne contaminants and can be shared by employers, WHS regulators, unions, industry bodies and others.

Suggested caption:

Do you work in one of the following industries?

Mining ⛏️
Construction 👷
Manufacturing 🏭
Agriculture 🌽
Transportation 🚒
Food processing 👩‍🔬
Laboratory research/Pharmaceuticals 💉

Work processes in these industries can create airborne contaminants (vapours, gases, mists, fumes and dusts), which can't always be smelled or seen to be present at levels harmful to your health.

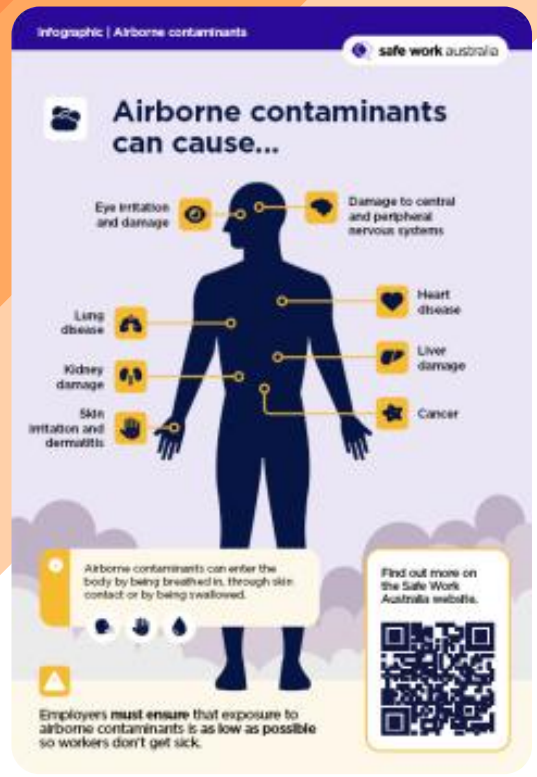
Under WHS laws, your employer must eliminate or minimise the risk of exposure.

Find out more about your rights on Safe Work Australia's airborne contaminants hub: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/WEL-infographic-worker-rights

Click here to download the infographics

3 Infographics

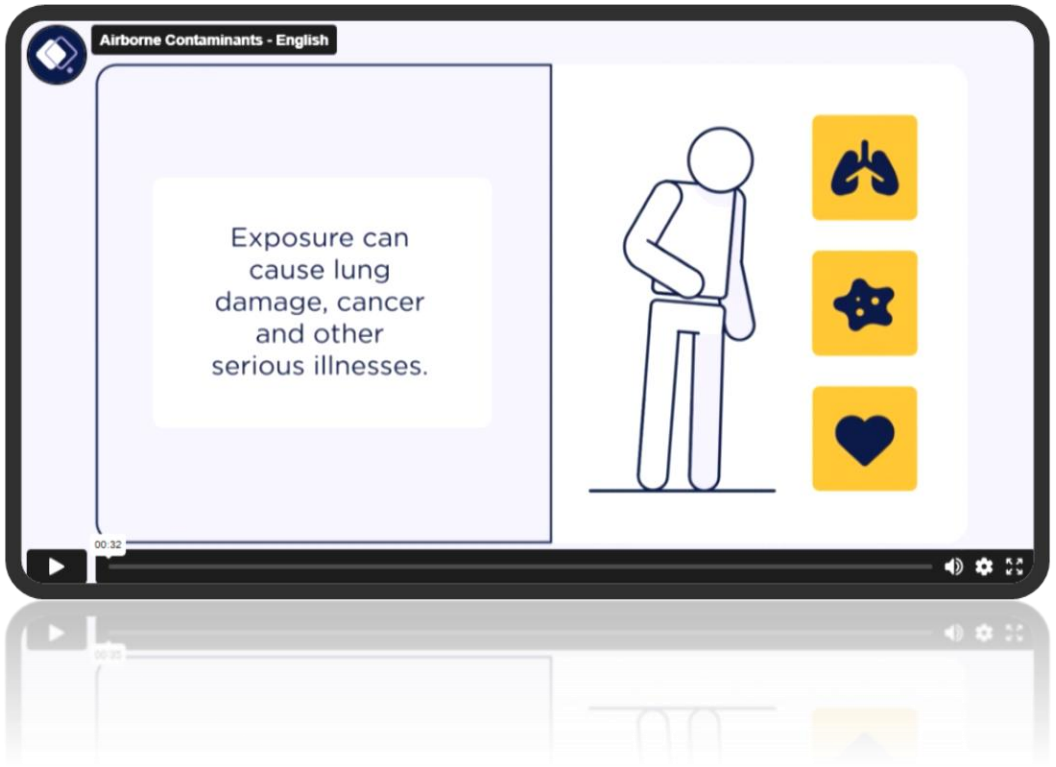
Our infographics explain what airborne contaminants are and how they can harm health. They also explain what employers and workers can do to meet their WHS duties and prepare for the changes on 1 December 2026. These can be shared digitally or physically around your workplace.



Click here to view the animations

4 Video animations

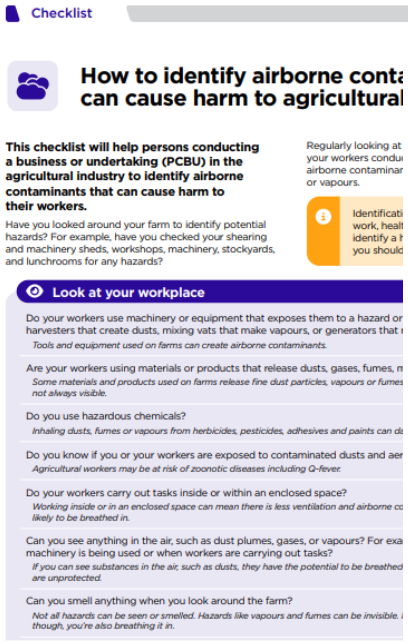
Our series of 5 video animations are aimed at helping employers and workers understand what airborne contaminants are, how to identify them, and how to manage risks relating to them in the workplace. They can be shared on your social media channels and shared digitally with your workers and stakeholders.



Click here for industry-specific resources

5 Industry-specific resources

Airborne contaminants like herbicides, pesticides and hay dusts are common in the agricultural industry. Fine dust particles are common in the construction and manufacturing industries. We have several resources to support businesses in these industries protect their workers from harmful exposure to airborne contaminants, including practical checklists and case studies.


Checklist

How to identify airborne conta can cause harm to agricultural

This checklist will help persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) in the agricultural industry to identify airborne contaminants that can cause harm to their workers.

Have you looked around your farm to identify potential hazards? For example, have you checked your shearing and machinery sheds, workshops, machinery, stockyards, and lunchrooms for any hazards?

Regularly looking at your workers condu airborne contaminar or vapours.

Identificati work, healt identify a h you should

Look at your workplace

Do your workers use machinery or equipment that exposes them to a hazard or harvesters that create dusts, mixing vats that make vapours, or generators that

Tools and equipment used on farms can create airborne contaminants.

Are your workers using materials or products that release dusts, gases, fumes,

Some materials and products used on farms release fine dust particles, vapours or fumes not always visible.

Do you use hazardous chemicals?

Inhaling dusts, fumes or vapours from herbicides, pesticides, adhesives and paints can d

Do you know if you or your workers are exposed to contaminated dusts and ae

Agricultural workers may be at risk of zoonotic diseases including Q-fever.

Do your workers carry out tasks inside or within an enclosed space?

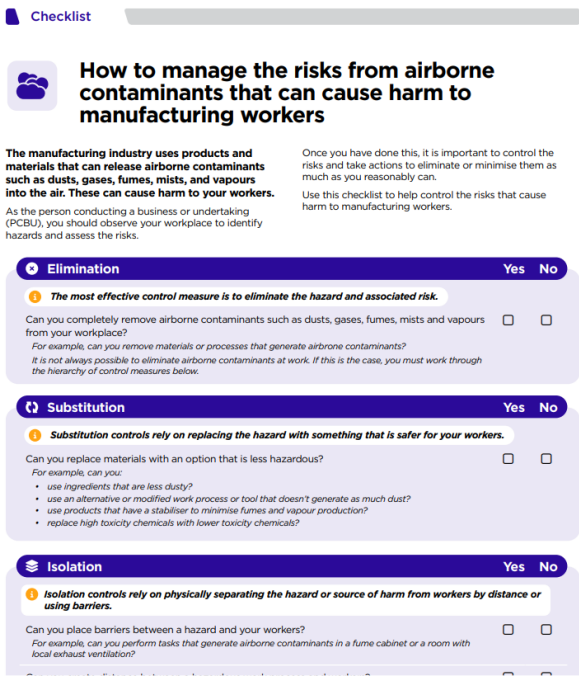
Working inside or in an enclosed space can mean there is less ventilation and airborne c likely to be breathed in.

Can you see anything in the air, such as dust plumes, gases, or vapours? For exa machinery is being used or when workers are carrying out tasks?

If you can see substances in the air, such as dusts, they have the potential to be breathed are unprotected.

Can you smell anything when you look around the farm?

Not all hazards can be seen or smelled. Hazards like vapours and fumes can be invisible. though, you're also breathing it in.


Checklist

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

The manufacturing industry uses products and materials that can release airborne contaminants such as dusts, gases, fumes, mists, and vapours into the air. These can cause harm to your workers.

As the person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), you should observe your workplace to identify 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 manufacturing workers.

Elimination Yes No

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

Can you completely remove airborne contaminants such as dusts, gases, fumes, mists and vapours from your workplace?

For example, can you remove materials or processes that generate airbrone contaminants?

It is not always possible to eliminate airborne contaminants at work. If this is the case, you must 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 an option that is less hazardous?

For example, can you:

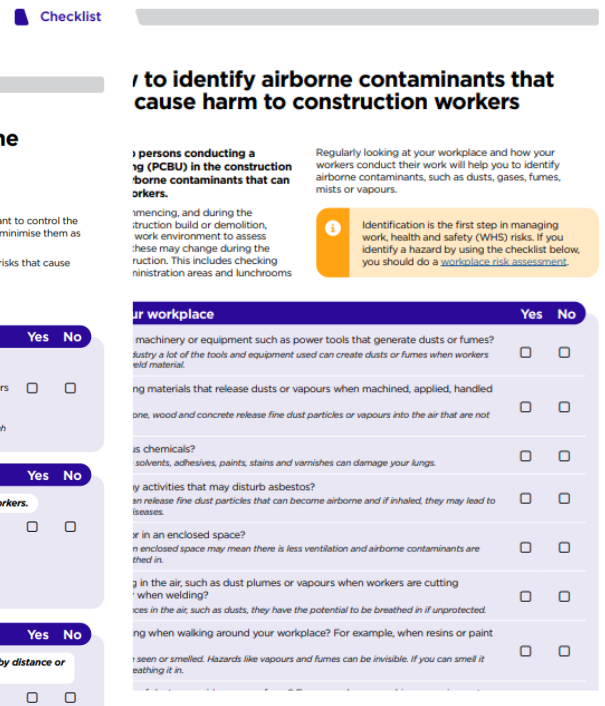
- *use ingredients that are less dusty?*
- *use an alternative or modified work process or tool that doesn't generate as much dust?*
- *use products that have a stabiliser to minimise fumes and vapour production?*
- *replace high toxicity chemicals with lower toxicity chemicals?*

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 barriers between a hazard and your workers?

For example, can you perform tasks that generate airborne contaminants in a fume cabinet or a room with local exhaust ventilation?


Checklist

to identify airborne contaminants that cause harm to construction workers

persons conducting a g (PCBU) in the construction borne contaminants that can orkers.

mencing, and during the truction build or demolition, work environment to assess hese may change during the ruction. This includes checking inistration areas and lunchrooms

Regularly looking at your workplace and how your workers conduct their work will help you to identify airborne contaminants, such as dusts, gases, fumes, mists or vapours.

Identification is the first step in managing work, health and safety (WHS) risks. If you identify a hazard by using the checklist below, you should do a workplace risk assessment.

ur workplace Yes No

machinery or equipment such as power tools that generate dusts or fumes?

dustry a lot of the tools and equipment used can create dusts or fumes when workers eld material.

ng materials that release dusts or vapours when machined, applied, handled

one, wood and concrete release fine dust particles or vapours into the air that are not

s chemicals?

solvents, adhesives, paints, stains and varnishes can damage your lungs.

y activities that may disturb asbestos?

n release fine dust particles that can become airborne and if inhaled, they may lead to iseases.

r in an enclosed space?

n enclosed space may mean there is less ventilation and airborne contaminants are thed in.

g in the air, such as dust plumes or vapours when workers are cutting when welding?

es in the air, such as dusts, they have the potential to be breathed in if unprotected.

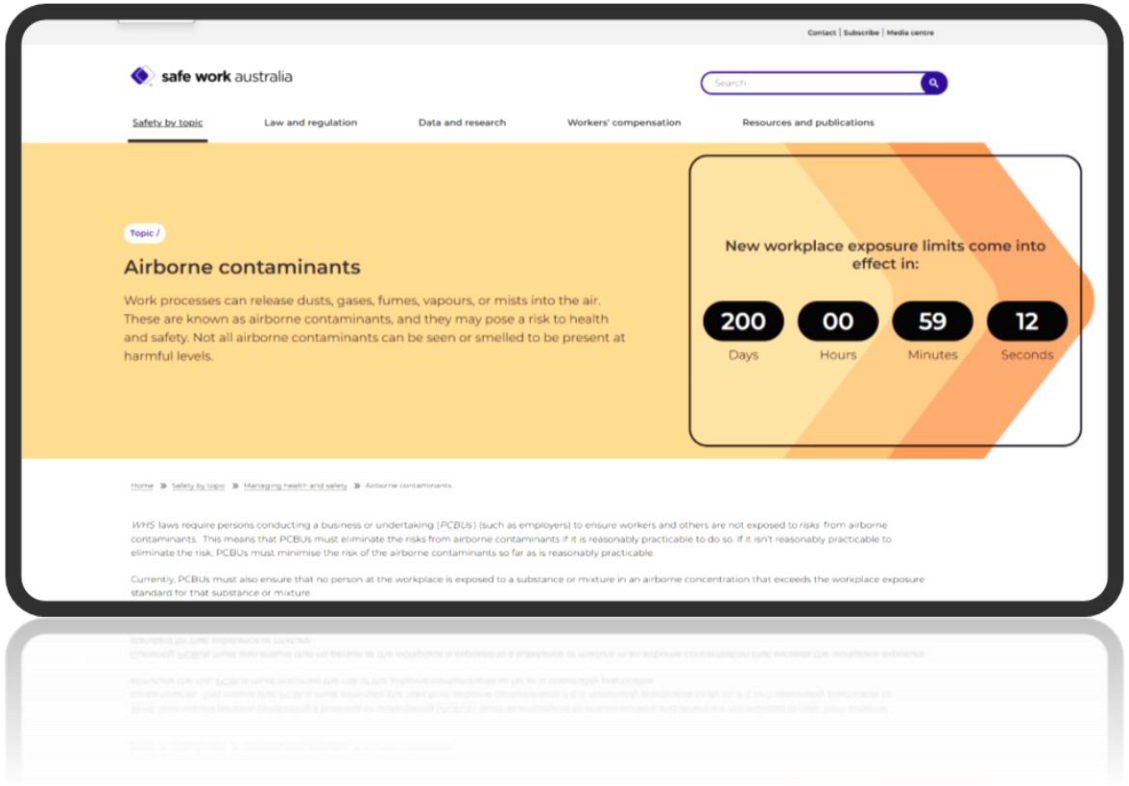
ng when walking around your workplace? For example, when resins or paint

seen or smelled. Hazards like vapours and fumes can be invisible. If you can smell it eathing it in.

Click here to view the hub

6 Airborne contaminants hub

All the resources we have developed, and are currently working on, are published to our airborne contaminants hub, a one-stop-shop with information to help employers, workers, WHS professionals, and governments and regulators.



7 Feedback

We welcome feedback on the resources we develop to help Australia transition to workplace exposure limits.

If you would like to share your thoughts on these resources, please contact us at:

chemicals@swa.gov.au

communication@swa.gov.au

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