



Safe work is for *life*

**national safe
work month**

2026

Activity kit

Overview

National Safe Work Month is held every October to encourage workplaces across Australia to prioritise work health and safety (WHS) and take action to reduce work-related injuries, illnesses and fatalities.

In 2026, the theme is Safe work is for life. This theme recognises that WHS is about more than preventing harm in the moment – it's about protecting workers' lives, health and future.

This activity kit is designed to help workplaces take part in National Safe Work Month by starting meaningful conversations and taking practical action each week.

Why safe and healthy work matters

Every work-related injury, illness and fatality has a human impact, affecting workers, families, workplaces and communities. National Safe Work Month is an opportunity to pause, reflect and take practical steps to prevent harm before it happens.

How to use this kit

Use the activities in a way that suits your workplace.

You can run them in:

- team meetings
- toolbox talks
- health and safety committee meetings
- leadership meetings
- planning days, and
- induction or refresher sessions.



The contents of this activity kit are designed to be used interactively for National Safe Work Month. It does not constitute legal advice. Workplaces should refer to their local WHS regulator for specific information on WHS requirements in their location.

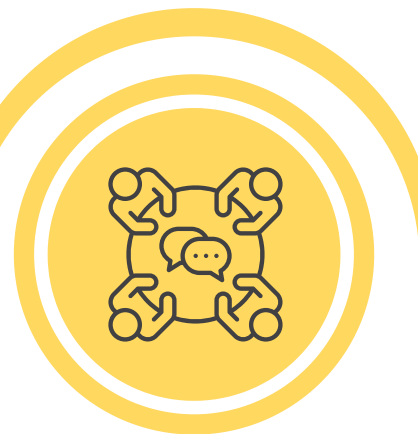
Plan your month

Each week, you can:



Watch the video to learn more about the week and its focus

Complete an activity



Have a discussion using the prompts

Record actions to take forward



Month-long activity: *safe work is for life*

Use this template, or create space on a wall or whiteboard with sticky notes, and ask everyone to record practical actions they can take to contribute to safe and healthy work for life.

This National Safe Work Month, we will contribute to safe and healthy work for life by...

1-11 October

Week 1

For life: Why WHS matters

The Australian WHS Strategy sets a national vision of safe and healthy work for all and a goal to reduce worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses.

To make progress against this vision, WHS must be core to how we do business – shifting from “how we do WHS” to “why we do WHS”.

To kick off National Safe Work Month, this week, we’re asking you to pause and connect WHS to what matters most: preventing harm before it occurs and making sure workers can return home safely.

Check out this week’s video to help get things started.

Watch the video 

Goal for this week



Start the conversation

This week, talk with your workers about why work health and safety matters in your workplace and identify one opportunity to make their work safer or healthier.

Week 1 | For life: Why WHS matters

Activity

Why we work safely



Examples of common hazards include repetitive movements, slips, trips and falls, harmful behaviours (like bullying, harassment violence and aggression), high job demands, vehicles, loud noise, extreme heat or cold and hazardous chemicals.

You can find out more about identifying hazards in our [model Code of Practice: How to manage work health and safety risks](#).

Ask workers to reflect on these questions individually, then discuss in small groups:

- What does getting home safely mean to you?
- What are the most serious things that could harm someone in our workplace?
- Who could be affected by our work? Consider workers, contractors, visitors, clients, customers and members of the public.
- Have we become used to any risks because “nothing has happened yet”?
- How do we know our current controls are working?
- What would make it easier for workers to raise WHS concerns early?
- What is one thing we already do well to prevent serious harm?
- What is one thing we could improve?

After you discuss as a group, record one commitment for the month.

Write your commitment here

Week 1 | For life: Why WHS matters

Activity

Why we work safely

Starter option

Hold a 15 minute team conversation and write down the top 3 WHS hazards workers raise.

Choose one action you can take this week to manage the risks of these hazards causing harm.

Top 3 hazards:

Action we can take:

Week 1 | For life: Why WHS matters

Activity

What are you working safely for?

Print out copies of our What are you working safely for? activity template and invite workers to write or draw what they are working safely for. Display selected responses in a lunchroom, intranet post or share them in a team meeting.

Use the responses to start a conversation about the human impact of WHS.



Scan to download the template



Week 1 | For life: Why WHS matters

Discussion

October 10 is World Mental Health Day



Common psychosocial hazards include job demands (high or low), low job control, poor support, lack of role clarity, poor organisational change management, inadequate reward and recognition, poor organisational justice, traumatic events or material, remote or isolated work, poor physical environment, violence and aggression, bullying, and harassment, including sexual and gender-based harassment, and conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions.

Learn more about identifying and managing psychosocial hazards in our [model Code of Practice: Managing psychosocial hazards at work](#).

World Mental Health Day is an opportunity to remember that safe work protects both physical and psychological health.

The Australian WHS Strategy identifies managing psychosocial risks as a persistent challenge. Psychosocial hazards such as high job demands, poor support and harmful behaviours can cause psychological (and physical) harm. These hazards occur as a result of how work is designed or managed, the work environment, or workplace interactions or behaviours.

Discussion prompts:

- Can workers think of times where they have seen any of the common psychosocial hazards in a workplace?
- What aspects of our work could cause harm if they were more frequent, prolonged or severe?
- Do workers have safe and accessible ways to raise health and safety issues?
- What psychosocial hazard should we look at more closely this month?

Notes:

12-18 October

Week 2

For health: What WHS protects

The Australian WHS Strategy highlights that there are still too many injuries and illnesses arising from work.

It identifies persistent challenges including musculoskeletal conditions, psychological injuries, cancer and other diseases caused by work, psychosocial risks, harmful substances, health and safety vulnerability, and the need for small business support.

This week is about broadening the conversation from immediate injuries to the physical and psychological health that WHS protects. Learn more by watching this week's video.

Watch the video 

Goal for this week



**Identify one
priority task**

This week, choose one physical or psychosocial hazard in your workplace and discuss how it could affect your workers' health.

Week 2 | For health: What WHS protects

Explainer

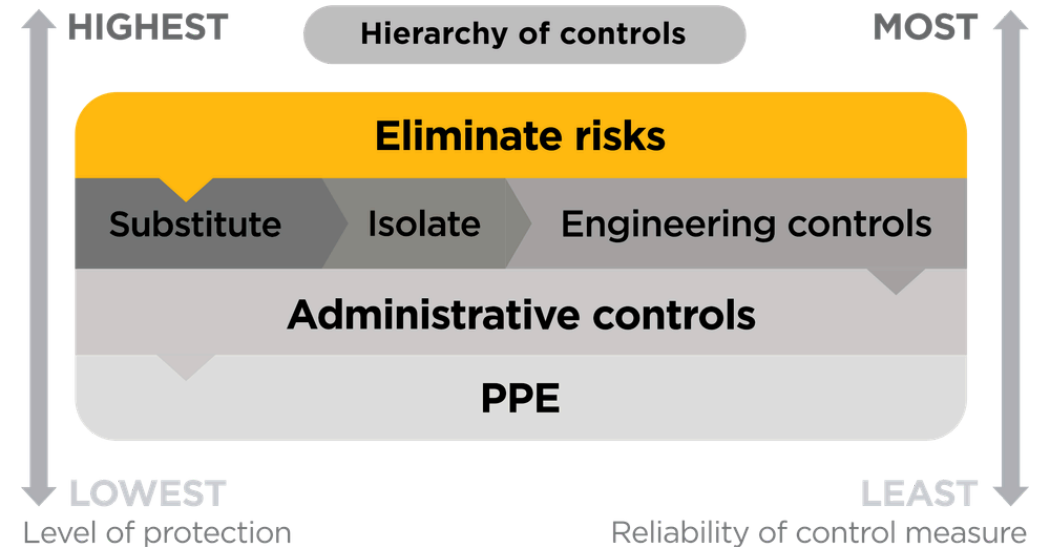
The hierarchy of controls

The hierarchy of controls helps rank controls from the highest level of protection and reliability to the lowest. It will help you to think about why a risk exists in the first place and consider whether you can redesign a given task to make work safer. It will also help you select the most appropriate control, or combination of controls for the risk.

Eliminating the risk is the most effective control, as it completely removes the hazard so it can no longer cause harm. If there is not a reasonable way to eliminate risks, you must minimise risks as much as you reasonably can by:

- **Substituting** the hazard with something safe
- **Isolating** the hazard from people
- Using **engineering controls**, for example, using mechanical devices to lift heavy loads or installing soundproofing material for loud noises.

If risks still remain after applying these controls, use **administrative controls** followed by **personal protective equipment (PPE)**.



Elimination, substitution, isolation and engineering controls are the most effective control measures because they control the risk at the source.

Administrative controls and PPE are the least effective controls as they rely on human behaviour or supervision to work - for example, policies and procedures to manage hazardous tasks only remain effective if workers consistently follow procedures and do not make mistakes. They can be used in combination with other more effective controls.

Week 2 | For health: What WHS protects

Activity Health hazards map

Print copies and share this template, or use a whiteboard, and ask workers to identify things in your workplace that could cause either immediate injuries or long-term health impacts. Afterwards, discuss as a group:

- Which physical risks need more attention?
- Which psychosocial risks need more attention?
- What controls do we have in place for these risks?
- What needs to change?



Examples of immediate injuries include burns, fractures or sprains and cuts and bruises.

Examples of long-term health impacts include mental health conditions, lung disease and cancer.

Immediate injuries	Long-term health impacts

Week 2 | For health: What WHS protects

Choose one physical hazard and one psychosocial hazard that may occur in your workplace and complete this template:

Activity Health hazards map

Starter option



Physical hazards (things that could cause someone physical harm) could include machinery, heavy objects, chemicals, working at heights, viruses and bacteria, dust and smoke.

Psychosocial hazards (things that could harm someone's mental health) could include bullying and harassment, sexual and gender-based harassment, high job demands, low job control, and remote or isolated work.

	Physical hazard	Psychosocial hazard
Hazard:		
What could go wrong?		
Who could be harmed?		
What do we already do to prevent harm?		
What is one improvement we can make this month?		

Week 2 | For health: What WHS protects

Select one focus area that is relevant to your workplace, and use the examples to start a discussion about how these risks are managed and whether your controls are effective.

Discussion Managing risks to health in the workplace



New workplace exposure limits come into effect from 1 December

Do your work processes release dusts, gases, fumes, vapours or mists into the air? These are known as airborne contaminants, and there are new exposure limits coming into effect on 1 December. Visit Safe Work Australia's [airborne contaminants hub](#) to learn more about the changes and how you can manage the risks of airborne contaminants in your workplace.

Health focus area	Examples of what to discuss	Examples of control measures
Musculoskeletal conditions	Hazardous manual tasks, body stressing, repetitive or sustained force, awkward postures, vibration, discomfort.	Design work to remove or reduce hazardous manual tasks, use mechanical aids and assistive equipment, ensure work stations are correctly set up.
Psychosocial risks	Work demands, low support, poor role clarity, harmful behaviours, violence, aggression, bullying, harassment.	Allow sufficient time to complete tasks, provide adequate support and training, apply policies transparently and fairly, adopt zero tolerance policies for violence, aggression, harassment and bullying.
Harmful substances and airborne contaminants	Hazardous chemicals, dusts, fumes, vapours, biological hazards, exposure controls, health monitoring where relevant.	Ensure adequate ventilation, undertake health and air monitoring, ensure safe handling procedures, provide adequate training.
Fatigue	Work hours, shift design, workload, breaks, safety critical tasks, night work, recovery time.	Design rosters to allow adequate recovery time between shifts, provide regular breaks, manage workloads.
Work environment and facilities	Entry and exit, workspace, lighting, ventilation, heat and cold, toilets, drinking water, washing, eating facilities, emergency plans.	Ensure safe access, provide adequate lighting and ventilation, providing access to hygiene facilities, implement effective emergency procedures.
Worker vulnerability	Young workers, workers working alone, multicultural and migrant workers, labour hire, complex contractual chains, workers who may hesitate to raise issues.	Provide appropriate induction, training and supervision tailored to workers' needs, consider language, experience and cultural factors.

19-25 October

Week 3

For the future: The long term impact

The National Return to Work Strategy's vision is to minimise the impact of work-related injury and illness and enable workers to have a timely, safe and durable return to work.

This week is about the future: how workplaces can reduce the long-term impact of work-related injury and illness and be ready to support workers if harm occurs.

Watch this week's video to find out more.

Watch the video 



Goal for this week



Make one practical improvement

This week, choose one action that will better protect workers now and into the future. This might include:

- introducing or improving a control
- updating a procedure
- improving first aid or emergency arrangements
- strengthening return to work support
- improving training or supervision.

Week 3 | For the future: The long term impact

Activity

Future impact scenario

Choose one realistic injury or illness scenario relevant to your workplace. For example:

- a worker develops a musculoskeletal injury from hazardous manual tasks
- a worker is injured in a vehicle or mobile plant incident
- a worker experiences psychological harm due to high job demands
- a worker develops illness from exposure to a hazardous substance.

Using this scenario, consider how you would respond to it based on the below questions.

- How would the worker report the injury or illness?
- Who would coordinate the workplace response and support the worker?
- How would the workplace help the worker understand available supports, including workers' compensation?
- How would the workplace stay in contact with the worker during their recovery?
- Who would support the supervisor or manager?
- How would the workplace ensure the worker returns to a physically and psychologically safe work environment?
- What lessons could be learned to prevent similar harm in the future?

Week 3 | For the future: The long term impact

Activity Future impact scenario

Starter option



Workers' compensation stigma is when an individual, group or the broader organisation negatively stereotypes or discriminates against an injured or ill worker seeking workers' compensation. This can include gossip, bullying or harassment from other workers, or workplace structures and procedures that penalise injured or ill workers.

Workers' compensation stigma can affect all aspects of the workers' compensation process. It can prevent the disclosure of injuries or illness, reduce engagement with the claims process, and reduce the effectiveness of recovery and return to work processes. It can also prevent injured or ill workers from making a workers' compensation claim or impact their recovery.

Talk through one "what if" scenario and write down:

- One action to prevent injury or illness from occurring
- One support action if someone is injured or becomes ill
- One thing you can do to reduce stigma around workers' compensation.

Prevention action

Support action

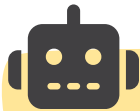
What is one thing we can do to reduce workers' compensation stigma?

Week 3 | For the future: The long term impact

Activity Future WHS scan

Use this activity to consider the evolving nature of work and the impacts it could have on your workplace, including how you manage risks to health and safety. For each change, ask:

- Could this affect us?
- What WHS or return to work issue could emerge?
- What should we do now?



Artificial intelligence,
automation or new technology

New work arrangements, including
remote, hybrid, gig, platform or
multi-employer work



Workforce demographic shifts

Labour shortages or
increased workload



Climate-related risks,
heat, extreme weather or
emergency events



Changes in substances,
materials, equipment or plant

Changes in customer, client,
patient or public interactions



Week 3 | For the future: The long term impact

Discussion

Good work supports recovery

The National Return to Work Strategy recognises that good work is good for health and supports recovery. In a return to work context, this means thinking about the worker's needs, workplace factors, physical and psychological safety, and coordinated support.

Discussion prompts:

- What does “good work” mean in our workplace?
- What makes work physically and psychologically safe and supportive?
- How could we adjust work without creating new risks for the worker or others?
- How do we keep the worker connected to the workplace while respecting their recovery?
- How do we reduce stigma around injury, illness, workers' compensation and return to work?

26-31 October

Week 4

For all: Action across all workplaces

The Australian WHS Strategy identifies system-wide shifts towards a more mature WHS system, from “how to do WHS” to “why we do WHS”, and from a focus on current work to the evolving nature of work.

The National Return to Work Strategy also emphasises positive workplace culture and leadership, supporting employers, supporting other stakeholders, and building and translating evidence.

This week is about turning October’s conversations into practical action that lasts beyond National Safe Work Month. Tune into this week’s video as we bring National Safe Work Month to a close but keep WHS front and centre – for life.

Watch the video 

Goal for this week



Commit to keeping it going

This week, decide on at least one improvement your workplace will continue beyond National Safe Work Month.

Week 4 | For all: Action across all workplaces

Activity

Listen, learn, act

Get together and reflect on the conversations you've had throughout National Safe Work Month. Ask:

- What is one thing we've learned this month?
- What is one change we've already made that we want to keep doing?
- What is one thing we still need to improve?
- What should we commit to doing before the end of the year?

We learned...

We will keep doing...

We will improve by...

Week 4 | For all: Action across all workplaces

Activity

Committing to safe work - for life

Provide everyone with a sticky note or card, or print copies of this page and cut out the templates. Ask everyone to finish the sentence: **Safe work is for life because...**

Once everyone has shared their thoughts, as a team, complete the following sentence: **By the end of the year we commit to...**

*By the end of the year we
commit to...*

**Safe work is for life
because...**

**Safe work is for life
because...**

**Safe work is for life
because...**

**Safe work is for life
because...**

Week 4 | For all: Action across all workplaces

Discussion

Planning the way forward

With National Safe Work Month wrapping up, now is the time to take action to keep work health and safety at the centre of the workplace.

Discussion prompts:

- What did workers raise during National Safe Work Month?
- What did leaders, supervisors or managers learn?
- What data or records helped us understand where harm may occur?
- What did we learn about worker health, long-term impact, return to work, consultation or culture?
- What should change in the next 30, 60 or 90 days?
- How will we review progress and share what we learn?

Notes:

Wrapping up

Thank you for taking part in National Safe Work Month!

Over the past 4 weeks, your workplace has taken time to have conversations, identify opportunities for improvement and commit to creating safe and healthier work for all.

Whether you completed one activity or every activity in this kit, every conversation and every action contributes to safer workplaces.

Keep the conversation going

Creating safe and healthy work is an ongoing process. We hope this activity kit sets the groundwork for you to continue to:

- consult with workers about health and safety
- identify new and emerging hazards
- review whether controls remain effective
- support workers' health, recovery and return to work
- use data and workplace experience to drive continual improvement
- celebrate improvements and learn from experience.

Thank you for supporting National Safe Work Month and for your commitment to creating safer and healthier workplaces - for life.



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2026

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