

Working safely in Australia

Information sheet

Safety is an important part of working in Australia

In Australia, the law says that your employer (your boss) must do all they can to make sure your job does not hurt you or make you sick. This law is called work health and safety (WHS) or occupational health and safety (OHS).

The law also says your boss must have insurance for you in case you are hurt at work. This is called workers' compensation. If you are hurt or get sick at work, the insurance may pay for your medical treatment and for your wages until you can work again.

This covers all workers in Australia, even if you are on a temporary visa.

What your boss must do

Your boss must look after your health and safety at work.

Your boss must:

- show you how to do your job safely or make sure someone shows you how to do your job safely
- make sure there is someone to watch out for you
- not ask you to do anything that needs a special licence, like drive a car, a crane or a forklift if you don't have the right licence
- have the right tools and equipment for you to do your job safely
- give you safety equipment if you need it to do your job.

Safety equipment

Work safety equipment is usually called personal protective equipment (PPE). There are special types of PPE for each job. This could be a hard hat, goggles or safety eye glasses, gloves, boots, aprons or ear muffs.

It needs to be in good condition and it should fit you comfortably. You need to know how to use it and you need to wear it properly.

If you think you need something extra, talk to your boss, a more experienced worker or the Health and Safety Representative (HSR) if there is one at your workplace.

What you must do to keep yourself safe at work

In Australia, the law also says there are things you must do to look after your own health and safety at work.

You must:

- be fit enough to do your job
- be well enough to do your job
- do what your boss tells you as long as it is reasonable and unless you think it is not safe or it could hurt you
- not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs or use alcohol or illegal drugs while at work
- not do anything that would hurt yourself or anyone else at work.

If you do not understand how to do anything you are asked to do at work, you should ask your boss or a more experienced worker for help.

These are some of the things that could hurt you at work:

- using equipment when nobody has taught you how to use it properly
- not wearing the right safety equipment (PPE) or not wearing it properly
- hurrying and taking short cuts
- doing things that take your mind off the job while you are working (like using your own mobile phone while you are working).

In Australia, the law says you have the right to ask questions about the work you have been asked to do and to say no if you are asked to do work that could hurt you. If you are asked to do something that you think may be unsafe, stop and talk to the boss or your supervisor.

Sometimes the boss at work is not the person who pays you, for example, where you work through a labour hire agency. If you work through a labour hire agency, they will pay you but someone else is in charge at work. If you don't want to talk to the boss at work, you can talk to the labour hire agency about your work health and safety.

There should be a person at work who can help you with any questions about work health and safety - find out who this is and how to contact them.

If you are not sure about something, ask someone for help.

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Your right to fair pay and conditions

In Australia, there are minimum wages and working conditions. The Fair Work Ombudsman helps employers and workers to understand these rights and responsibilities at work, they can also help you find out what you should be paid.

The Fair Work Ombudsman can investigate a case if they think someone has broken workplace laws.

To contact the Fair Work Ombudsman or to learn more about your rights at work, visit the website www.fairwork.gov.au or call 13 13 94.

Bullying

Bullying is repeatedly saying or doing something to a person that frightens them or humiliates them. It could be things like laughing at them, calling them unkind names, pushing into them or breaking their things.

Nobody should be bullied at work. If you are bullied, talk to your boss or to another worker and tell them you want it to stop.

If it doesn't stop you can talk to someone in the government in the state or territory where you are working. There is a list at the end of this fact sheet. You can also talk to the Fair Work Commission, call 1300 799 675 or go to www.fwc.gov.au

What to do if you get hurt or injured at work

Get first aid or see a doctor or nurse straight away. You have the right to choose the doctor you see. This can be your own doctor, a local doctor or a doctor or nurse at work. You can ask the doctor for a medical certificate and you can show this certificate to your boss.

Tell your boss that you have been hurt. You will probably need to fill in a form called an incident report. If you can, try and do this before you go home. If you need help filling in the form, ask someone to help you. The form will ask you to explain what happened and how you got hurt. It helps stop other people getting hurt or injured like you did. ***It is very important to have this record - it may affect your workers' compensation.***

If you have medical bills or can't work because of your injury, you may get workers' compensation to pay for medical treatment and support until you get back to work. Remember to ask your boss about this as soon as possible, and fill in any forms you need to apply for workers' compensation.

If you are hurt, do not be afraid that you will get into trouble. Even if you have made a mistake, you should report the injury and ask for help.

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Checklist for starting work

There are some important things that should happen when you first start a new job. Your employer (the boss) or another worker who knows the job should make sure that these things happen when you first start a new job. If you don't understand English well, you can ask for an interpreter or ask another worker who speaks your language to explain it to you.

This checklist will help you work out whether you know about the things that are important for work health and safety.

Checklist for starting work

- Has somebody shown you how to do your job, and checked to make sure you are doing it safely? Yes No
- Have you met your boss and the people you will be working with, especially the people who look after your health and safety?..... Yes No
- Do you know who to ask if you are unsure of what to do or need help?..... Yes No
- Has someone shown you around the place where you will be working, and shown you the entry and exit points, toilets, meal room and first aid areas? Yes No
- Have you been told about any places you should not go, and why?..... Yes No
- Has somebody shown you how to safely use the equipment you need to do your job?..... Yes No
- Has somebody checked to make sure you are using it right?..... Yes No
- Do you have all the safety equipment you need?..... Yes No
- Do you know how to use it and wear it?..... Yes No
- Do you know what to do and who to tell if you are hurt or feel sick at work, and where to get help and first aid?..... Yes No
- Do you know how to call the fire brigade, police or ambulance?..... Yes No
- Do you know what to do if there is an emergency, and what the alarm sounds like?..... Yes No
- Do you know how to get out of your workplace in an emergency?..... Yes No
- Do you know who to ask about your health and safety?..... Yes No

Did you answer No for any questions? If so, talk to your boss or a more experienced worker to find out this important information for your own safety.

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If you are worried about anything to do with your health and safety at work, or about workers' compensation, you can talk to someone in the government in the state or territory where you are working. If you work for an Australian federal government agency, or a large national employer, you may need to contact Comcare. You should not get into trouble for talking to the government about work health and safety or workers' compensation.

To ask about work health and safety contact:

New South Wales

SafeWork NSW
Website: safework.nsw.gov.au
Email: contact@safework.nsw.gov.au
Phone: 13 10 50

Victoria

WorkSafe Victoria
Website: worksafe.vic.gov.au
Email: Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1800 136 089 (free call)

Queensland

Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, Office of Industrial Relations (WHSQ)
Website: worksafe.qld.gov.au
Phone: 1300 362 128

Western Australia

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
Website: commerce.wa.gov.au/WorkSafe/
Email: safety@dmirs.wa.gov.au
Phone: 1300 307 877

South Australia

SafeWork SA
Website: safework.sa.gov.au
Email: help.safework@sa.gov.au
Phone: 1300 366 255

Australian Capital Territory

WorkSafe ACT
Website: worksafe.act.gov.au
Email: worksafe@act.gov.au
Phone: 13 22 81

Northern Territory

NT WorkSafe
Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au
Email: ntworksafe@nt.gov.au
Phone: 1800 019 115

Tasmania

WorkSafe Tasmania
Website: worksafe.tas.gov.au
Email: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au
Phone: 03 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)
Phone: 1300 366 322 (inside Tasmania)

Commonwealth

If you work for an Australian federal government agency, or for a large national employer, you may fall within the Comcare scheme.

Comcare

Website: comcare.gov.au
Phone: 1300 366 979

To ask about workers' compensation if you are hurt at work contact:

New South Wales

State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA)
Website: sira.nsw.gov.au
Email: contact@sira.nsw.gov.au
Phone: 13 10 50

Victoria

WorkSafe Victoria
Website: worksafe.vic.gov.au
Email: Info@worksafe.vic.gov.au
Phone: 1800 136 089 (free call)

Queensland

WorkCover Queensland
Website: worksafe.qld.gov.au
Email: info@workcoverqld.com.au
Phone: 1300 362 128

Western Australia

WorkCover WA
Website: workcover.wa.gov.au
Phone: 1300 794 744

South Australia

ReturnToWorkSA
Website: rtwsa.com
Email: info@rtwsa.com
Phone: 13 18 55

Australian Capital Territory

WorkSafe ACT
Website: worksafe.act.gov.au
Email: worksafe@act.gov.au
Phone: 13 22 81

Northern Territory

NT WorkSafe
Website: worksafe.nt.gov.au
Email: datantworksafe@nt.gov.au
Phone: 1800 250 713

Tasmania

WorkSafe Tasmania
Website: worksafe.tas.gov.au
Email: wstinfo@justice.tas.gov.au
Phone: 03 6166 4600 (outside Tasmania)
Phone: 1300 366 322 (inside Tasmania)

Commonwealth

If you work for an Australian federal government agency, or for a large national employer, you may fall within the Comcare scheme.

Comcare

Website: comcare.gov.au
Phone: 1300 366 979

To ask about pay and conditions at work

Fair Work Ombudsman
Website: www.fairwork.gov.au
Phone: 13 13 94

To ask for help if you are being bullied

Fair Work Commission
Website: www.fwc.gov.au
Phone: 1300 799 675

If you need an interpreter, call
the Telephone Interpreter
Service on 131 450