



Department of Energy, Mines,
Industry Regulation and Safety



GUIDE

First steps to farm safety



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Further details of work health and safety publications can be obtained by contacting:

WorkSafe
Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: safetycomms@demirs.wa.gov.au





Contents

Using this Guide.....	2
Work health and safety.....	3
Introduction to work health and safety law	3
Consultation.....	3
Identifying hazards through a workplace inspection.....	5
Hazard identification.....	5
Induction.....	6
Training, supervision and record keeping	8
Plant and machinery	10
Tractors.....	10
Quad bikes	12
Working at height	14
Using ladders.....	14
Working on platforms, walkways and roofs	16
Machinery and guarding	18
Plant and machinery: General maintenance	18
Guarding.....	20
Electrical hazards	22
Power lines, power points, switchboards and RCDs	22
Electrical tools: Plugs, leads and damage	24
Hazardous chemicals.....	26
Safe storage and transport.....	26
Safe handling.....	28
Visitor safety.....	30
Child and visitor safety	30
Notifying WorkSafe	32
Next steps.....	33
Now that you've taken the first steps of farm safety, what's next?	33
Contact WorkSafe.....	33

Using this Guide

Farms are unique workplaces. The combination of hazards and the nature of the work makes agriculture one of the most dangerous sectors in which to work.

When you work on the farm every day, you know what you have to do to get the job done. Farmers are practical and more often than not, find a way to solve a problem. Everything keeps going, perhaps until the day it doesn't, or someone less familiar with your vehicle, machine, equipment or animals tries to get your solutions to work for them. Good risk management not only protects yourself and your workers, but it also ensures that your business doesn't stop.

The *First steps to farm safety: Guide* provides you with a foundation for establishing good safety practices on your farm. The checklists in this guide are not extensive and cover key points to get you started. You will need to build on these points by considering what may be relevant or specific to your farm and your farming activities.

When using the checklists, should you answer "No" to any of the items, consider what actions you will need to take to get yourself back on track to good safety practices.

Acknowledgment

This Guide was developed using material adapted from SafeWork SA.

Work health and safety

Introduction to work health and safety law

The *Work Health and Safety Act 2020* and associated Work Health and Safety (General) Regulations 2022 came into effect in March 2022 and so if you haven't already, it's a good time to check that your safety processes are up-to-date. It is useful to involve family members and workers so everyone becomes familiar with identifying risks.

Work health and safety (WHS) laws require that reasonably practicable controls are put in place to protect everyone at a workplace. The term 'reasonably practicable' refers to what could be reasonably done at a particular time and involves considering the likelihood of exposure to a hazard, degree of harm, what is known about the hazards, and ways of eliminating or minimising risk.

Consultation

A safe workplace is more easily achieved when everyone talks openly about work health and safety issues and concerns, helps to identify hazards and risks, and works together to find solutions. Good consultation is essentially about people talking to each other so that you all know what's going on with safety. Workers often have valuable ideas about how to reduce risks, make improvements and find solutions.

Consultation is a requirement of WHS laws, and an essential element in the proactive management of health and safety in workplaces. You must consult on health and safety matters with:

- workers (including contractors, sub-contractors, their workers, seasonal and labour hire workers)
- health and safety representatives (where applicable)
- volunteers
- anyone else who is directly affected.

Setting up a safe workplace	Yes	No
Your business has a WHS policy which includes: consulting workers, managing hazards, informing, training and supervising, maintaining a safe workplace, monitoring and reviewing.		
The WHS policy is reviewed regularly.		
The WHS policy is easily accessible.		
There are procedures in place for resolving issues.		
There is an emergency plan in place for fire, serious injury or other emergencies.		

Consultation	Yes	No
Workers or health and safety representatives are regularly consulted on health and safety matters.		
Workers are encouraged to be involved as you develop and later review your WHS policy and practices.		
Workers are encouraged to identify hazardous tasks and conditions, and suggest ways to fix them.		
Records are kept of meetings, feedback, decisions and action items, and safety solutions are regularly reviewed for effectiveness.		
There are ways for workers to report hazards, incidents, near misses and injuries.		
All workers, including contractors and sub-contractors, seasonal and labour hire workers are consulted on health and safety matters.		



For more information, see
Farm safety checklist

Identifying hazards through a workplace inspection

You can use the checklists in this Guide to assess what are typically the highest farm workplace risks. If you are further along your safety journey you may prefer to use the more detailed WorkSafe [Farm safety checklist](#).

Hazard identification is a process of identifying anything that could injure you or anyone else working on the farm.

Types of hazards to look for include:

- Physical (e.g. falls from height, electricity, manual handling, noise, heat or cold).
- Plant operation (e.g. from cutting, grinding, pressing or rolling (includes machinery, tools, appliances and equipment), and mobile equipment such as forklifts, tractors and quad bikes).
- Biological/health (e.g. bee stings, snake bites, contact dermatitis, zoonosis or allergens that cause asthma and other illnesses).
- Psychosocial (e.g. fatigue and stress).
- Ergonomic (e.g. carrying or moving heavy objects, or the height and position of workbenches).

As you know hazards can change, so it's best to carry out inspections regularly.

Hazard identification

As you identify any hazards consider:

1. **Elimination** – can you dispose of dangerous, unsuitable or obsolete plant and prevent it from being used?
2. **Substitution** – is there an alternative, safer plant or method (e.g. fit 'slam shut' catches to stockyard gates instead of chains, or use a side-by-side instead of a quad bike)?
3. **Engineering controls** – are guards in place on all accessible and dangerous parts of machinery or plant?
4. **Administrative controls** – have safe operating procedures for handling stock, moving augers and field bins, and safe operation of mobile plant been developed and implemented?
5. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)** – do all operators wear appropriate PPE such as hearing/eye protection, gloves, helmets for riding quad bikes, and sun protection?

This is referred to as the hierarchy of control. It's best to implement risk controls that are as high in the order as possible (e.g. elimination or substitution) because they are more reliable, and you may need to use more than one type of control.

Induction

When a new worker or contractor starts work, it's good practice to show them around and tell them what they need to know, including:

- key risks that everyone needs to know about (e.g. paths and tracks to be followed when moving around the farm, overhead power lines, traffic hazards)
- your WHS policy and safe work procedures
- how to report hazards, incidents, near misses and injuries
- what to do in an emergency
- their health and safety representative, first aider and fire warden.

You should also do an induction for:

- contractors and visitors (you might use a simpler induction for visitors)
- existing workers transferring to a new worksite or into a new job
- workers returning after extended leave or for a new season
- workers doing a hazardous task or using new equipment for the first time.

When inducting new workers make sure you:

- check they have understood what they have been told or shown
- don't assume they have the skills needed to carry out all farm jobs safely
- give them copies of all relevant guidelines and policies.

Induction	Yes	No
Language, culture and literacy needs of workers are considered.		
New workers are inducted when they first start.		
New workers are provided with a copy of their induction.		
Workers returning after an extended time are inducted.		
Workers doing a hazardous task or using new equipment for the first time are inducted.		
Contractors are inducted.		
Visitors are inducted.		

Training, supervision and record keeping



Training and supervision are important requirements. Workers need to know how to do their jobs safely and understand the issues that affect their health and safety.

Supervision is an opportunity to support your workers and develop a good working relationship. By observing how your workers are doing their work you can correct any mistakes early.



Keeping records is a smart way of proving that you are effectively managing your work health and safety responsibilities.

Keeping records can also help you to check the health and safety performance of your business and make improvements. The detail and extent of recording will depend on the size and complexity of your operations.

Make sure that everyone in your workplace is aware of what records they need to keep, including where they are kept so that everyone can access them.

Training and supervision	Yes	No
Workers have been spoken to about their training needs.		
A training plan is in place for workers.		
Records are kept of each worker's training.		
Workers are trained to follow safe work practices.		
New workers are adequately supervised until they have demonstrated task competencies.		

Record keeping and documentation	Yes	No
An incident register is maintained.		
A hazard register is maintained.		
Hazard identification, risk assessment and control processes are in place.		
A hazardous chemicals register is maintained.		
An asbestos register, showing the location of asbestos materials, is maintained (where applicable).		
Plant registration details are kept. Certain plant, such as large air receivers, must be registered with WorkSafe.		
Testing, maintenance and inspection records for plant and equipment are kept.		

Plant and machinery

Tractors

No matter how long you have been working with tractors, it's important to remember that they are powerful machines that can cause serious injury and death.



Always wear a seat belt where fitted.



Fit a roll-over protective structure (ROPS) and falling object protective structure (FOPS) to protect the operator.



Don't park on a steep slope.



Check clearance of overhead power lines.

Tractors	Yes	No
Safety precautions are considered when starting, driving, dismounting and parking, e.g. trip hazards, area around tractor is clear of obstruction.		
All associated risks are considered when fitting a front end loader attachment, e.g. safe working load, stability.		
A risk assessment has been carried out to check if there is a risk of roll-over.		
All tractors are fitted with a suitably engineered ROPS.		
Tractors at risk of being struck by a falling object, such as a dropped load, have been fitted with FOPS.		
Operators always wear a workable seat belt, where fitted.		
Passengers on tractors have appropriate seats, foot holds and hand holds.		
Children are prevented from riding on tractors under any circumstances.		

Quad bikes

Quad bikes have become a popular vehicle on farms, but they are also the leading cause of fatalities on Australian farming properties. The majority of injuries result from sideways, backward and forward rollovers, trapping or crushing the driver underneath.

The most common cause of death is due to entrapment and inability to breathe under the weight of an overturned bike (up to 400 kg). An operator protective device, also called a roll-over protective structure (ROPS), helps prevent crushing in the event of rollover.

Consider whether a quad bike is the most suitable vehicle for the task. A side-by-side, ute or tractor may be more suitable for some tasks.



Wear a helmet when riding.



Fit a roll-over protective structure.



Carry loads in accordance with the operator's manual.



Avoid uneven, steep and muddy areas.



Provide training for operators.

Quad bikes	Yes	No
The safest vehicle is selected for the task.		
Riders are trained and physically capable of actively riding a quad bike over different types of terrain. If not physically capable, they cannot safely ride a quad bike.		
All riders wear appropriate personal protective equipment, including a helmet.		
All quad bikes are fitted with an approved ROPS.		
Riders know how to calculate safe loads and use attachments and understand where to find this information for each quad bike at the workplace.		
Riders are provided with training about workplace safety rules, including speed limits and no-go zones for quad bikes.		
Riders know which jobs quad bikes can be used for, which jobs they should not be used for and what other appropriate vehicles are available.		
Children are prevented from riding on adult quad bikes and are closely supervised if permitted to use an age appropriate quad bike.		



For more information, see
Quad bikes in the workplace: Guide.

Working at height

Using ladders

Falls from height can have devastating consequences, even from relatively low heights.

The type of work that can be safely performed on a ladder is limited. There are many different types of ladders, so choose one which is suitable for the job. Other methods of access such as scaffolding or an elevating work platform should be considered for difficult tasks or work at height.



Maintain 3 points of contact when using a ladder (2 hands and 1 foot or 2 feet and 1 hand).



Check rungs for damage before use.



Only use a ladder on stable ground.



Ensure ladder has a pitch of about 1:4 (1 metre out to 4 metres up).



Ensure compliance with load rating.

Working at height with ladders	Yes	No
Ladders are placed on a stable surface.		
Ladders are secured at the top and bottom so they cannot shift position.		
Rungs are checked for damage before use.		
Ladders used for access extend at least one metre above the landing.		
Ladders used are suitable for the task.		
Three points of contact (two feet and one hand, or two hands and one foot, must be in contact with the ladder at all times) are maintained when ascending or descending ladders.		
Ladders to bins, silos, tanks, stands and windmills are guarded and locked away when not in use.		
External sight gauges and sight glasses are used on above-ground fuel storage or silos to remove the need to climb a ladder to check levels.		



For more information, see *Managing the risk of falls at workplaces: Code of practice*.

Working on platforms, walkways and roofs

Ensure suitable edge protection is in place to prevent falls from elevated work areas, or have a competent person install an anchor point so that a harness can be used when you are working at heights.

Rather than climbing, consider other measures, such as using an elevating work platform, or using a drone to inspect the top of equipment or buildings. Ensure crawl boards are available if working on a roof.

Working on fragile roofing materials such as asbestos or fibreglass presents a serious hazard. They can fracture without warning and you or a worker could fall through the roof, suffering serious or even fatal injuries.



Ensure edge protection is used where there is a risk of a fall from height.



Provide a safe way of getting onto and down from roofs.



Ensure the roof or platform is strong enough to support the weight of people, tools and materials.

Working on platforms, walkways and roofs	Yes	No
Edge protection is in place where there is a risk of falling from an elevated workplace.		
All potential hazards have been identified before working on any roof area or using the roof as a means of access (e.g. for repair, maintenance, demolition or inspection).		
Access and egress points for getting onto and down from roofs are identified.		
Prominent warning notices or signs are fixed to all sides of buildings where access can be made to fragile roofs, warning that fragile roofing materials have been used.		
Appropriate access equipment (e.g. crawl boards, roof ladders, walkways, planks, anchor points and harnesses) is readily available.		
Suitable footwear is worn to control the risk of slipping.		
A safety harness and fall arrest equipment is worn where required, which has been installed by a competent person.		
Fragile skylights are secured by safety wire mesh fixed either above or below the plastic or polycarbonate sheet, or by installing a guard rail to prevent people standing on them.		
Roofing and skylights are regularly maintained.		

Machinery and guarding

Plant and machinery: General maintenance

All farms need to manage the risks of injury that come with using agricultural plant and machinery. By thinking about what you do on a daily basis and what equipment you use, you will better manage the risks which are part of your everyday farming activities.

Regular inspections should be arranged for all machines and powered equipment by someone who knows about the hazards and work practices needed to work with agricultural plant. Service, maintain and repair your equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.



Pre-start checks are conducted.



Ensure maintenance is undertaken by a competent person.



Tag and lock out plant being worked on.



Ensure plant is isolated and stored energy released.

Plant and machinery: General maintenance	Yes	No
Regular inspections are performed by someone who knows about the hazards and work practices.		
Equipment is serviced, maintained and repaired in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications by a competent person.		
Records are kept of all servicing and maintenance.		
Modifying agricultural plant is done to the manufacturer's recommendation or with expert advice.		
Machine power is isolated before adjusting, unclogging or servicing equipment.		
All machines and powered equipment have been adequately labelled with safety decals and caution notices.		
Operator manuals and safety instructions are readily accessible for all powered machines.		
Transporting agricultural plant on a road or track is done at a safe speed and equipment is securely hitched.		
Operators have been taught safe hitching procedures.		
Workers are aware of the risk of plant contacting overhead powerlines.		
Farm vehicles are fitted with seat belts which are in working order and used at all times.		
Drivers of farm vehicles have the correct licences and competency to operate them.		
There are clear speed limits, 'no go' zones, designated parking areas, visibility aids and warning signs as needed.		
Keys are removed from vehicles when not in use.		



For more information, see *Managing the risks of plant in the workplace: Code of practice*.

Guarding

One of the risks of working with agricultural plant is the chance of coming into contact with or getting trapped between moving parts or materials, or being hit by material thrown from the machine.

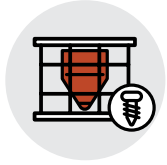
Provide guards where agricultural plant parts are within reach and could become hazardous during operation, routine maintenance or adjustment.



Guarding prevents access to dangerous parts of plant.



Augers are only used with guarding in place.



Guarding is in place on hoppers with auger screws.



Do not remove guard during operation.



Workers are instructed in safe procedures related to guarding.

Guarding	Yes	No
Guards are fitted to all required equipment and not removed.		
Plant is isolated and tagged out if guards are either deliberately or inadvertently removed.		
Workers are fully instructed about safe procedures for guarding, isolation devices, locks and danger tags.		
Lock-out procedures and tag devices are fitted where required.		
No repairs or maintenance are done when a machine is running.		
Guards are designed and fitted according to the relevant Australian Standards and manufacturer's specifications.		
Augers are only used when all guards are in place.		

Electrical hazards

Power lines, power points, switchboards and RCDs

Electrical hazards associated with all electrical power cords, fittings, machinery, tools and equipment need to be identified. Assess each hazard for the likelihood and severity of possible injury or harm, and develop safe work procedures to control them. Any suspect items should be immediately put out of use, tagged out and either isolated or kept in a safe place until repaired or discarded.

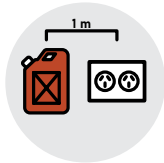
Residual current devices (RCDs), which switch off immediately when electricity 'leaks' to earth at a level harmful to a human, offer a high level of personal protection from electric shock.



Check the location of overhead and underground power lines before work starts.



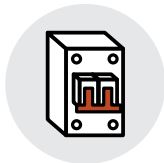
Inspect, check and test electrical installations regularly.



Keep flammable chemicals more than 1 metre away from sources of energy.



Waterproof or protect outside power boards from water.



Clearly label main isolation switches and RCDs, and make sure they're accessible.

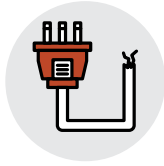
Power points, switchboards and RCDs	Yes	No
Outlets, plugs, sockets, leads and power points are in good condition.		
Power circuits are protected with appropriately rated fuses or circuit breakers.		
Main and isolation switches are clearly labelled and accessible.		
All moveable electrical equipment and power boards are protected by an RCD.		
Flammable chemicals are located more than one metre away from an electrical power point.		

Electrical tools: Plugs, leads and damage

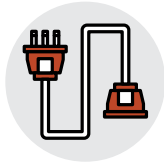
A competent person, such as an electrician, should inspect and test wiring, cords, plugs, tools and equipment regularly.

Check electrical equipment for obvious external damage and look out for shorting or sparking fittings.

Tools should not be used if the casings, cords or plugs are broken or damaged.



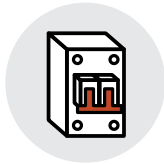
Inspect tools and leads for damage.



Use heavy duty extension leads that are suitable for the work environment.



Ensure appropriate PPE is worn when using electrical tools.



Fit RCDs to electrical installations where handheld and portable electrical tools are used.

Electrical tools	Yes	No
All electrical equipment is maintained and in good condition.		
Testing and tagging is current for all electrical and portable electrical equipment.		
Maintenance records are kept and available.		
Electrical power tools and electrical equipment are adequately earthed.		
Multiple extension leads, double adaptors and power boards in series are not used.		
Unsafe equipment is disconnected, isolated and labelled.		
All moveable electrical equipment and power boards are protected by an RCD.		
Electrical leads, power boards and equipment are kept away from potential sources of damage (e.g. water, heat, being run over).		

Hazardous chemicals

Safe storage and transport

Most farmers handle, use, store and transport hazardous chemicals for a range of activities.

Hazardous chemicals are those that have been classified as such under the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS). Examples include fuels, liquid petroleum gas (LPG), pesticides, some herbicides, fertilisers, acids and industrial gases.



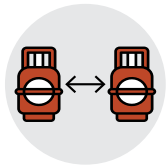
Containers are clearly labelled.



Chemicals are stored in a well ventilated and lockable area.



Chemicals are kept upright when storing and transporting.



Segregate chemicals by storing apart.

Safe storage of hazardous chemicals	Yes	No
Risk assessments are regularly carried out for storage of hazardous chemicals.		
Safe work instructions are in place and workers trained for storage of hazardous chemicals.		
Safety data sheets (SDS) are available for all chemicals being stored.		
Register of hazardous chemicals is kept.		
Chemical containers are clearly labelled.		
Containers are tightly closed when not in use.		
Chemical storage is appropriate and well-ventilated.		
Chemicals that react dangerously when mixed and have the potential to start a fire or release toxic gases are safely stored apart.		
Emergency procedures are in place for management of spills and incidents.		
Advisory or warning signage is in place.		

Safe handling

A hazardous chemical's label has advice on safe handling and information about the chemical's identity and toxicity. A register containing a list of all hazardous chemicals and your SDS must be maintained at your property and be accessible and understood by workers.



Workers have been trained to handle chemicals safely.



A hazardous chemical register is kept at the workplace.



SDS are available for chemicals in the workplace.



Emergency eye wash stations and showers are immediately available and maintained.



Appropriate PPE is provided to workers handling chemicals (safety glasses, face shield, gloves, apron, masks or respirators).

Safe handling of hazardous chemicals	Yes	No
Risk assessments are regularly carried out for handling hazardous chemicals.		
Safe work instructions are in place and workers trained for handling and use of hazardous chemicals.		
SDS are available for all chemicals in use.		
Waste oils and other products are disposed of appropriately.		
Emergency procedures are in place for management of spills and incidents.		
Spill kit or containment equipment is available.		
Advisory or warning signage is in place.		
Health monitoring is carried out (where required).		

Hazardous substances	Yes	No
Licensing and storage of dangerous substances (e.g. LPG, fertilisers) meets state regulations and you have informed WorkSafe where applicable.		
The procedure for removal of asbestos, including restrictions, is clearly understood (i.e. for removal of more than 10 square metres of non-friable asbestos a licensed asbestos removalist must be used).		
All asbestos containing materials are handled safely and appropriately and you have informed WorkSafe where applicable.		
An asbestos management plan and register is kept for buildings built before 2003.		

For more information, scan the QR codes below.



How to manage and control asbestos in the workplace: Code of practice.



How to safely remove asbestos: codes of practice.



Safe storage and handling of dangerous goods on farms.

Visitor safety

Child and visitor safety

Children want to get involved in everything, especially on farms. However, when their natural curiosity is combined with a narrow range of vision and an underdeveloped sense of danger, a farming property can be a dangerous place.

The mix of home, work and recreation on a farm creates a complex risk environment. It is not always possible to remove the risk, but adults must limit access to hazards for young family members, as well as farm visitors.

Major risks to children on farms include:

- falls from plant and machinery
- drowning in dams, tanks and creeks
- guns or chemicals
- tractors, motorbikes, quad bikes or other farm machinery
- contact with livestock.



All visitors are provided with an induction to farm safety.



Children have a safe, fenced off play area away from moving vehicles, livestock and other hazards.



Children are not carried in the back of utes, tractors, trucks or trailers without appropriate seating.



Children are not allowed to ride on or operate adult quad bikes.

Child and visitor safety	Yes	No
All visitors to work areas (i.e. not just the house) sign in and are given information on site hazards.		
Emergency telephone numbers are available at every telephone.		
Visitors are isolated from the work you are doing, with appropriate warning signs and barriers.		
Play areas are clearly and securely separated from the work yard.		
Workshops are locked or have restricted access and children are closely supervised if they are present.		
Children are kept well away from moving vehicles and machinery, particularly when reversing.		
Electrical equipment is kept out of reach where practicable.		
Bodies of water (e.g. wells, tanks and dams) are securely covered or fenced where practicable to prevent unauthorised access.		
Ladders to bins, silos, tanks, stands and windmills are guarded and locked away when not in use.		
Chemicals, herbicides and pesticides are locked away when not in use.		
Explosives, firearms and ammunition are kept locked away.		
Children have been instructed in basic animal handling skills.		
Paddocks and animal pens are kept secured.		
There are rules in place for communication when children leave the house and enter work areas.		

Notifying WorkSafe



Reporting an incident and definitions are available at www.demirs.wa.gov.au/WHSincident



To report a **death, serious injury or illness, or life-threatening dangerous incident**, preserve the site and immediately call **1800 678 198**



For a **non life-threatening dangerous incident**, preserve the site and immediately notify WorkSafe **online**



In an emergency also call **000**



Provide first aid and care for injured workers



Preserve the site until authorised by a WorkSafe inspector

The above applies to reporting requirements under the WHS legislation. An incident may have additional reporting requirements under other legislation.

Next steps

Now that you've taken the first steps of farm safety, what's next?

The first steps are about the most common farm hazards, but next you could think about other hazards that may be significant for your workplace and find guidance about these on www.worksafe.wa.gov.au.

For example, hazards may include:

- manual tasks
- psychosocial hazards and mental health
- employer-provided accommodation
- sun safety
- heat stress
- fatigue
- working alone (isolated and remote work)
- noise
- confined spaces.

Contact WorkSafe

Our call centre is available to field enquiries about work health and safety issues including complaints, improvement and prohibition notices and requests for information.

The call centre is open from 8.30 am to 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday (closed on public holidays).

Phone: 1300 307 877

Postal address: Locked Bag 100, EAST PERTH WA 6892



For more information, see our agricultural health and safety webpage.



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WorkSafe

Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety
303 Sevenoaks Street
CANNINGTON WA 6107

Telephone: 1300 307 877

NRS: 13 36 77

Email: safetycomms@demirs.wa.gov.au

Website: www.worksafe.wa.gov.au