







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.

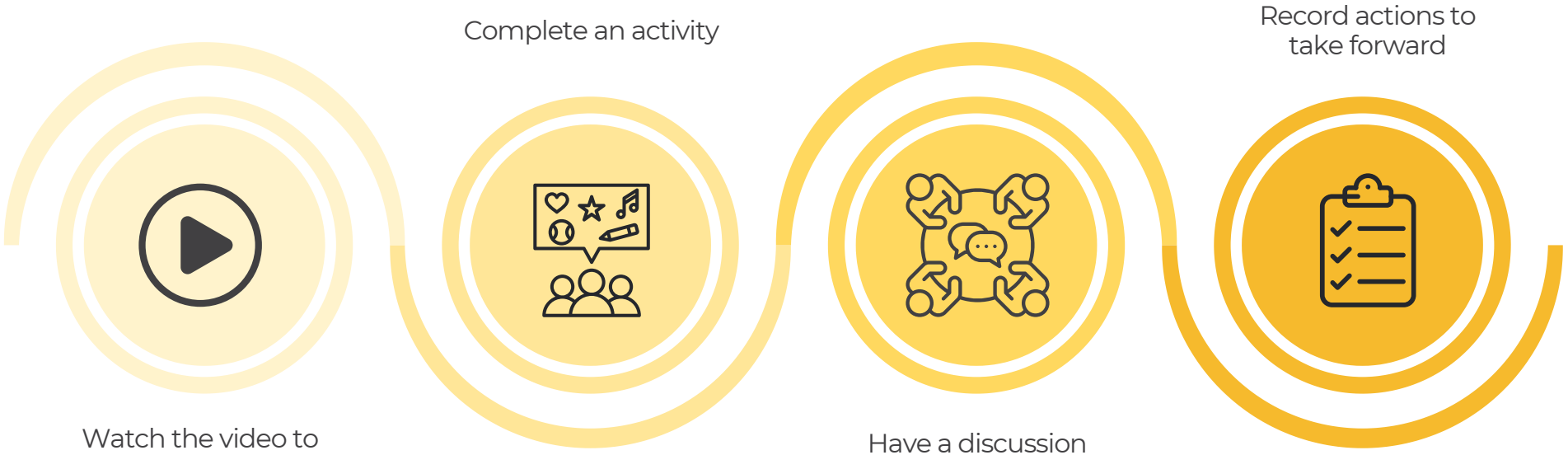
The contents of this activity kit are designed to be used interactively for National Safe Work Month. It does not constitute legal advice. Workplaces should refer to their local WHS regulator for specific information on WHS requirements in their location.

Safe work is for life

Activity kit

Plan your month

Each week, you can:



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...

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.

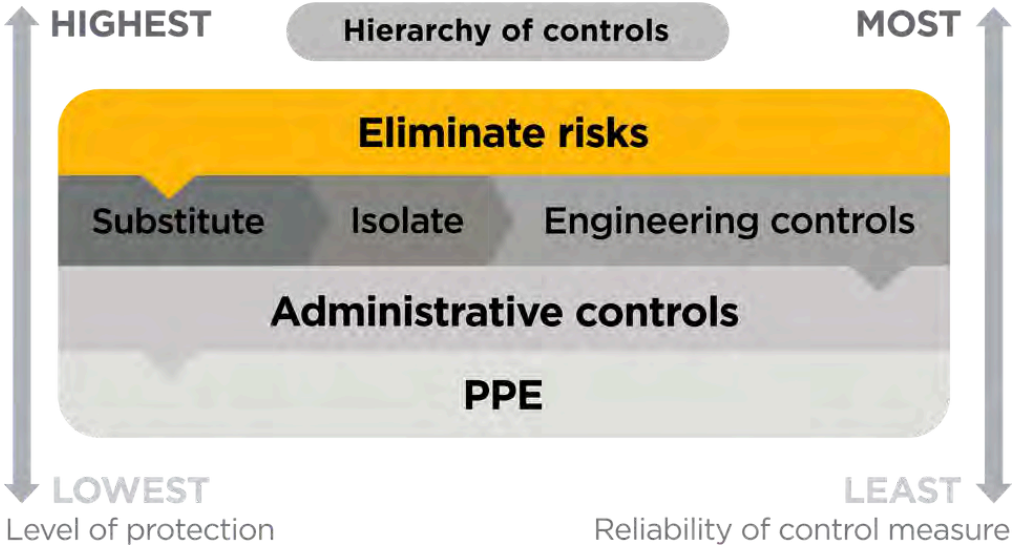
Explainer
The hierarchy of controls

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.

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

Activity
Health hazards map

Starter option

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

	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?		

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.

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 ventiliation, 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 cultutral factors.