

EARTHWORKS RISK MANAGEMENT STANDARD

SCOPE

This standard relates to all activities under the management and control of Monash University in Australia and applies to affected workers; including staff, students, contractors and visitors.

The purpose of this standard is to provide an overarching framework for the effective management of Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) associated with underground disturbance and the corresponding risks at Monash University.

1. Activities involving Earthworks

1.1 Risk Management

The Contractor Responsible Person (CRP) or Monash Supervisor must ensure that any risks arising from earthworks are identified, so far as reasonable, before work commences. If there is an element of doubt, clarification must be sought from the HS&W team. Risk Management can be undertaken by completing a risk assessment or a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS).

1.1.1 SWMS will be completed by contractors undertaking the works.

1.1.2 Risk assessments will be completed by Monash staff.

1.1.3 Risk assessments and SWMS must be conducted by the party who will perform the works. The SWMS and risk assessment must be documented and should be specific to the work being undertaken.

1.1.4 Risks that may arise include:

- Excavating a substantial volume of soil such that the banks could collapse;
- Create a risk of falling from heights (for risk management requirements see [Working From Heights Risk Management Standard](#));
- Damaging services that could directly cause harm (e.g. high voltage electrical cabling, gas piping);
- Disrupting services that could compromise existing safety systems (e.g. damaging fire monitoring services, data cables, water supplies).

2. Earthworks Permit-to-work

2.1 Any work conducted under the management control of Monash University that may involve earthworks must have a permit-to-work before commencement unless that work involves minor soil disturbance using only hand tools to a depth of less than 60 cm from ground level at the time services may previously have been installed. Where this ground level cannot be clearly identified, works should not be considered as minor soil disturbance.

2.2 Permits are requested through [Buildings and Property](#) by the Contractor Responsible Person (CRP) where applicable or a Monash Supervisor overseeing the works.

2.3 The CRP or Monash Supervisor is responsible for ensuring that:

- The party conducting the work has demonstrated suitable competency to perform work of this nature;
- Hazards associated with the work appear to have been identified and risks assessed;
- The intended work methods appear to be safe and without risk to health; and
- A Permit-to-work is in place before any works commence.

2.4 Conditions on a Permit-to-work

2.4.1 The Permit Holder must ensure that:

- Existing underground services have been located, so far as practicable, including the use of:
 - Plans and drawings;

- Scanning technology;
 - Exploratory excavation works; and/or
 - Signage indicating presence of services.
- 2.4.2 Powered plant and equipment are operated in such a fashion as to minimise the potential to damage to any service accidentally located during earthworks.
- 2.4.3 The edge or bank of any removed soil has been secured to prevent hazardous collapse and that there is a safe means of entry and exit to the work area.
- 2.4.4 The work area has been isolated, so far as practicable, from another person.
- 2.4.5 Emergency procedures are in place for the duration of works.
- 2.4.6 For excavations that are:
- A trench (if the excavated depth is more than 1.5 metres);
 - A shaft (if the excavated depth is more than 2 metres);
 - A tunnel; or
 - If the construction excavation would be deep enough for a person to enter or there is a health and safety risk to anyone from the excavation.
- 2.4.7 A completion of the WorkSafe 'Notice of intention to perform construction excavation work' must be submitted by the person who will be conducting the excavation and evidence of approval from WorkSafe must be available in order to commence.
- 2.5 Monitoring
- 2.5.1 The CRP or Monash Supervisor must conduct monitoring to ensure that, as far as practicable, controls identified through risk management are in place.
- 2.5.2 The CRP, Monash Supervisor or the Director, Health Safety & Wellbeing, or their representative, may review the conduct of any work activities relating to earthworks entry without notice.

3. Responsibility for Implementation

It is the responsibility of the Director, Health Safety & Wellbeing to ensure that this standard is implemented.

4. Records

For HSW Records document retention please refer to the University's: [Information Governance and Recordkeeping Procedure](#)

5. Definitions

Definitions specific to this standard are provided below.

Key word	Definition
Contractor	Any person or business engaged by Monash University who enters into a contractual arrangement to conduct work for Monash University, but whose primary employer is not Monash University.
Contractor Management	The process of managing work that is being/has been outsourced by Monash University. In the context of this standard 'contractor management' relates to HSW.
Contractor Responsible Person (CRP)	The Monash University staff member/s responsible for engaging and/or supervising a contractor to complete works at Monash University sites.
Earthworks	Where there is any potential to disturb underground services either as a result of earth removal (excavation, trenching, etc.) or through the introduction of equipment underground (staking, aerating, monitoring, etc.).
Excavations	Any earthworks that involves the formation of:

	• a trench (if the excavated depth is more than 1.5 metres) • a shaft (if the excavated depth is more than two metres) • a tunnel (if the construction excavation would be deep enough for a person to enter or there is a health and safety risk to anyone from the excavation)
Ground Level	The present height of the surface of the earth.
Permit-to-work Certificate	Documented evidence of the issuing of a permit-to-work.
Permit Holder	A person who is authorised by both an approved person and the authorised person to supervise activities involving prescribed activities as documented in a permit-to-work certificate.
Suitably Qualified Person	Person who can demonstrate that, through their experience, knowledge, qualifications and/or skills, they are competent to perform underground disturbance and determine safe methods of controlling the risk of fire.

GOVERNANCE

Parent policy	HS&W Policy
Supporting documents	Monash University HSW documents HSW Risk Management Standard
Supporting schedules	N/A
Associated documents	Australian and International Standards ISO 45001:2018 Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems WorkSafe Guidance documents Compliance Code 'Confined Spaces', WorkSafe Victoria September 2008
Related Legislation	Occupational Health and Safety Act (2004), Victoria Occupational Health and Safety Regulations (2017) Victoria
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1.0	2026	Administrative changes due to: • Conversion of Procedure to a HSW Standard • Transition Procedure out of University Policy Bank on to HSW website