



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

UOW SAFE@WORK

WHS COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

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1. Introduction

The University recognises that communication and dissemination of information relating to Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) is an important part of the strategy to eliminate and prevent occupational injury and illnesses. Employees require accurate health and safety information to perform their work safely, and should be informed about health and safety activities and issues.

The transfer of WHS information is important to:

- alert others of incidents and associated corrective actions that may arise
- provide new or updated WHS legislation or associated requirements
- provide details of changes to the workplace, the system or method of work, the plant or chemicals used.

2. Scope

This document applies to the communication of WHS information for the University.

3. Responsibilities

3.1. Workers

Workers have a responsibility to follow requirements as communicated to them, for example requirements contained in safe work procedures and workplace signage. Workers should report to their supervisor instances where they or other persons, for example students or visitors, have difficulty understanding health and safety information.

3.2. Deans, directors, managers and heads of units

Deans, Directors, Managers and Heads of Schools are responsible for:

- ensuring staff, students, contractors and visitors are adequately provided with WHS information that takes into account their communication requirements
- identification and assessment of health and safety information needs, taking into account requirements for people who are non-English speaking, illiterate or having disabilities.

3.3. WHS Unit

The WHS Unit is responsible for ensuring:

- mechanisms are in place for alerting new and changed legislative requirements
- interpretation of health and safety information and dissemination of relevant information to the university.

Additional responsibilities can be found in the [WHS Roles and Responsibilities](#) document.

4. Communication

4.1. Accessing Information

Workers, students, contractors and others can access relevant health and safety information through:

- accessing online resources such as the [WHS internet site](#) or [SafeWork NSW](#) websites
- discussions with supervisors, peers, WHS or Workplace Advisory Committee representatives
- contacting the WHS Unit
- attending meetings
- reading communications.

4.2. Forms of Communication

Health and safety information is accessible through forums such as WHS resources or consultation mechanisms including:

- WHS internet site
- WHS intranet site for staff
- WHS performance measures in the UOW [Performance Indicators system](#)
- WHS committee minutes
- workplace advisory committee minutes
- hazard and incident reports in SafetyNet
- internal and external WHS training programs such as inductions
- material safety data sheets via Chem Alert online
- fire and emergency evacuation information
- contractor safety induction guide.

Health and safety information may also be made available:

- on workplace noticeboards
- posters displayed around the workplace
- through meetings such as toolbox talks
- by email such as safety alerts
- in newsletters
- on safety signage.

4.3. Information Dissemination

4.3.1. Internal

WHS information is disseminated via supervisors as well as the university WHS Committee and Workplace Advisory Committees for WHS.

At the local level such as school, unit or faculty, the dissemination of relevant health and safety information is determined by organisational need. Relevant information which may be disseminated at the local level includes:

- changes to the workplace, the system or method of work, the plant or chemicals used
- incidents and associated corrective actions that may arise
- new or updated WHS legislation or associated requirements.

4.3.2. External

Exchange of information with external parties such as customers e.g. students, suppliers, contractors and public authorities occur as determined by organisational need and legislative requirements.

The lines of communication between the university and external parties allow relevant health and safety information to be exchanged to ensure compliance with legislative requirements and industry best practice.

As a general rule external parties can access UOW WHS information via the University WHS internet site available at: <http://staff.uow.edu.au/ohs/index.html>. The majority of external parties who access the website include students, contractors and other universities.

Information exchange includes, but is not limited to:

- displaying of WHS Policy in prominent locations such as staff noticeboards and visitor entry points
- induction for students, e.g. laboratory induction
- WHS procedures such as laboratory manuals or handbooks
- WHS information is disseminated to suppliers for contractors and labour hire services via the WHS induction guide and local WHS induction meeting where appropriate. Further information can be found at the [Contractor Safety webpage](#)
- material safety data sheets (received from manufacturers)
- emergency plans for emergency services
- instructions for the safe installation, commissioning, operation and maintenance of plant or equipment
- product recalls (<http://www.recalls.gov.au/>).

Where the exchange of information is identified, local units should document procedures for identification, responsibility and processes for the communication of WHS information with external parties.

4.3.3. Language and Literacy

Language and literacy of employees/students must take into account issues including non-English speaking, people who are illiterate or with disabilities. Where employees may have difficulty understanding or reading English, the information needs to be translated or directly explained to individuals.

If there is a need for translation of health and safety information, interpreter services may be used. To obtain access to interpreter services please contact [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS\) National](#).

4.4. Safety Alerts

Communication of hazards, incidents and details from investigation findings can be communicated to the organisation through a safety alert. The need for a safety alert is determined by an assessment of risk from relevant information including the type, nature and scale of incident, the impact to the organisation, potential for reoccurrence and specific audience to be targeted.

Any personal or private information is to be removed or blocked from the safety alert.

4.5. Induction

An induction is a mechanism to communicate health and safety requirements at the commencement of work for the workplace. Staff, students, contractors and visitors should attend an induction to ensure they are familiar with University health and safety requirements. The type of induction will depend on the level of work being undertaken as defined by the WHS training guidelines.

A general induction should include:

- a tour of the workplace
- roles and responsibilities
- emergency procedures
- general workplace hazards and safety signs
- workplace hazard/incident reporting
- introductions to fellow personnel in the work area
- specific occupational health and safety instructions relevant to the area (e.g. personal protective equipment, safety signage, safe work procedures)
- consultation mechanisms.

Units should perform local area inductions using the UOW staff induction guide.

5. Emergency Procedures

In order to ensure the safety of employees and students, it is required that lecturers orientate students to the fire evacuation procedures for the teaching areas being utilised for each class. This should be performed at the commencement of session for each class. A simple overhead or slide may be used for the relevant area (using the individual maps linked to the individual assembly areas below), and the R.A.C.E posters used as a guide to the explanation.

This should ensure that students know how and where to evacuate should the need arise, and not place staff, and particularly building wardens, at risk of injury trying to evacuate uninformed people.

6. WHS Signage



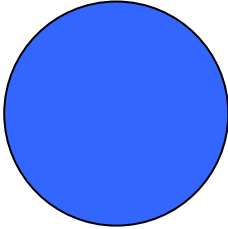











Signs are displayed throughout the university as a visual aid for communicating instructions, advice or emergency information to the campus community. Signage can be in the form of symbols, graphics, text or a combination and is a risk control measure.

Any WHS signage purchased should meet the requirements of the relevant standards and codes of practice, including AS 1319 Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment. All signs are required to have colours conforming to the munsell system that is included in AS 2700-2011 Colour standards for general purposes. A table listing designations for colours used to create different types of safety signs is also included in AS 1319. Signage should be displayed in accordance with legislative and university requirements.

Signs may be determined as outcome of a risk assessment e.g. an administrative control measure.

6.1. Types of Signs

Any WHS signage used must comply with relevant UOW guidelines, legislative requirements and any associated documents. The following table outlines the correct notification of signs.

Description	Use	Image	Example
Stop and Prohibition	To indicate that an action or activity is not permitted.		
Mandatory	To indicate a requirement must be followed.		
Limitation or Restriction	To place a numerical or other defined limit on an activity or use of a facility.		
Warning	To identify areas that contain a particular hazard or hazardous condition that is not likely to be life threatening.		
Hazard Danger	To identify areas that contain a particular hazard or hazardous condition that is likely to be life threatening. The sign must identify the hazard.		
Emergency Information	To indicate the location of, or directions to, emergency related facilities such as safety equipment or first aid facilities.		
Fire sign	To advise the location of fire alarms and fire-fighting facilities		

In addition to general WHS signage, substances and products in packages, containers, tanks and pipelines must be correctly labelled. This allows easy identification to avoid incorrect use and subsequently any potential harm to people or damage to plant or property.

The labelling or other such markings should be in accordance with the relevant WHS guideline (e.g. hazardous substances) and Standards. This may include, but not limited to Australian Standards such as:

- AS1319 Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment
- AS1345 Identification of the Contents of Pipes, Conduits and Ducts.

6.2. Sign Size and Legibility

The sign sizes used are based on an observer with standard vision, viewing the sign at the maximum distance at which it would have relevance in the particular case, and include an allowance to ensure a reasonable level of sign prominence or conspicuousness under normally expected workplace conditions.

6.3. Specific Requirements

The following documents outline specific requirements for signage relevant to the hazards involved.

- [Biosafety Manual](#)
- [Laboratory Safety Guidelines](#)
- [WHS Risk Management Guidelines](#)
- [Workplace Safety Inspections](#)
- [Emergency Procedures](#)
- [Asbestos Management Guidelines](#)
- [Working in Confined Spaces Guidelines](#)
- [Dangerous Goods Storage and Handling Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Hazardous Chemicals Guidelines](#)
- [Noise Management and Hearing Conservation Guidelines](#)
- [Laser Safety Guidelines](#)
- [Managing the Risk of Falls](#)

Other legislative requirements, such as the building code, will outline minimum requirements at the design and build stage of construction. The following table outlines WHS signage requirements from the WHS Regulation 2011:

Application	Requirement
Location of exits	Clearly marked and signs posted to show the direction to exit doors to aid emergency evacuation.
Areas at the workplace where persons are required to use personal protective equipment	Clearly identified by blue PPE signs.
Prevention of Falls at Workplaces (working at height).	Use signs to warn: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) of a fall hazard or being hit by falling objects b) not to access a hazardous area where work at height is occurring

Application	Requirement
Where the whole or any part of the roof of a building or structure comprises a surface of material that can break, easily snap or shatter or is weak or perishable.	Warning signs are displayed at all points of access to any work area where fragile material is present, and are securely fixed in positions where they will be clearly visible to persons accessing the work area.
Industrial rope access systems	Barricades and signposts are placed on all access areas below the working area and anchorage locations.
Any place of work at which there is a risk of exposure to atmospheric contaminants or unsafe levels of oxygen.	Location is isolated and that appropriate warning signs are provided at the place to indicate restricted access.
Where a scaffold is incomplete and left unattended.	Appropriate controls, including the use of danger tags or warning signs, are used to prevent unauthorised access.
Entry into a confined space.	The signs must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) identify the confined space, and b) inform workers that they must not enter the confined space unless they have a confined space entry permit, and c) be clear and prominently located next to each entry to the confined space.
Asbestos	Persons are warned, by the use of signs, labels or other similar measures, of the presence of asbestos or asbestos-containing material in a place at which construction work is being carried out.
Construction work - requiring appointment of principal contractor	Erect signs that are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) are clearly visible from outside the site b) show the principal contractor's name and telephone contact numbers (including an after-hours telephone number) c) show the location of the site office for the project
Noise Exposure	Sign-posted as hearing protector areas and the boundaries of these areas are clearly defined.
Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods	Requirements for signage use include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) pipe work b) transfer systems c) storage locations d) warning signs at work locations (where required)

6.4. Sign Installation

The local area requiring the sign is responsible to engage the appropriate person to install the signs as per the following requirements.

6.4.1. General Requirements

Signs should be:

- erected so that they do not create a hazard
- removed immediately if the information they contain is no longer relevant
- maintained in good condition
- kept clean.

6.4.2. Visibility

Signs should be:

- adequately illuminated with natural or artificial light where general lighting does not provide for adequate visibility
- clearly legible
- be clearly visible by those enter and working in the area and attract attention
- mounted in such a way that that the likelihood of being obscured is prevented or, at least, minimised.

6.4.3. Positioning

Permanent signs, e.g. not portable or moveable signs:

- should be mounted as close as practicable to the observer's line of sight in the vertical plane
- should not present a hazard to pedestrians, e.g. mobile signs or those placed overhead
- should be sited to allow a person ample time after first viewing the sign, to heed the warning
- where placed on moveable objects such as doors, windows or racks, should ensure that the likely change in position does not cause the sign to be out of the line of sight, and thus, void the purpose of the sign.

6.4.4. Number of signs

Note: The placement of several signs close together may result too much information in one place that little or none is absorbed, or the visual effect may be so confusing as to make it difficult to distinguish individual messages.

6.4.5. Sign Maintenance

Signs should be kept clean to ensure they are legible and visible. Signs should be replaced when they become damaged or no longer legible. Replacement entry notification signs for laboratories or workshops can be ordered using the [Hazard Identification Sign Order Form](#).

Signs shall be inspected via [workplace safety inspection process](#). Corrective actions required from the workplace inspection process shall be reported via SafetyNet.

6.4.6. Verification

WHS signage is verified through various processes and at regular intervals including WHS audits and workplace inspections. Workplace inspections are important to ensure that signage is appropriate, relevant and maintained according to the workplace environment. An organisation needs to establish which safety signs are required to meet legislative requirements, industry and internal standards.

7. Program Evaluation

In order to ensure that these guidelines continue to be effective and applicable to the university, they will be reviewed regularly by the WHS unit in consultation with the WHS committee. Conditions which might warrant a review of the guidelines include:

- reported hazards or injuries
- non-conforming systems
- WHS committee concern.

Following the completion of any review, the program will be revised/updated in order to correct any deficiencies. These changes will be communicated via the WHS committee.

8. Reference Documents

- NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011
- NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011
- AS1319 : Safety Signs for the Occupational Environment
- AS1345 : Identification of the contents of pipes, conduits and ducts
- AS2293.1 : Emergency escape lighting and exit signs for buildings - System design, installation and operation
- AS 2700-2011, Colour standards for general purposes

9. Related Documents

- [WHS Risk Management Guidelines](#)
- [WHS Training Guidelines](#)
- [WHS Consultation Statement](#)
- [WHS Legislative Compliance Guidelines](#)
- [Communication of Emergency Procedures to Students](#)
- [Biosafety Manual](#)
- [Laboratory Safety Guidelines](#)
- [Hazard Identification Sign Order Form](#)
- [Workplace Safety Inspections](#)
- [Emergency Procedures](#)
- [Asbestos Management Guidelines](#)
- [Working in Confined Spaces Guidelines](#)
- [Dangerous Goods Storage and Handling Guidelines](#)
- [Working with Hazardous Chemicals Guidelines](#)
- [Noise Management and Hearing Conservation Guidelines](#)
- [Laser Safety Guidelines](#)
- [Managing the Risk of Falls](#)

10. Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	March 2009	Manager WHS	New document created
2	June 2009	Manager WHS	Inclusion of WHS signage requirements
3	April 2010	Manager WHS	Minor review no significant changes
4	August 2010	Manager WHS	Document updated to incorporate the Personnel name change to Human Resources Division
5	March 2012	Manager WHS	Rebrand
6	January 2013	Manager WHS	Document updated to provide more clarity on where the WHS Policy should be displayed, reflect the unit name change and incorporate legislative changes.
7	March 2013	Manager WHS	Minor updates
8	April 2015	Manager WHS	Example of Safety Alert removed.
9	July 2016	Manager WHS	Rebrand