



## DET Occupational Health and Safety Policy

### Policy

This policy assists schools in creating and maintaining healthy and safe working environments.

### Summary

The Department values and supports its people and is committed to ensuring healthy and safe working and learning environments. The Department recognises that employee health, safety and wellbeing is integral to achieving excellent educational and work performance outcomes and commits, so far as reasonably practicable to:

- prevent workplace injuries and illnesses
- allocate adequate resources
- enhance workplace culture
- provide transparent and robust information, training, instruction and documentation
- drive continuous improvement in health, safety and wellbeing
- maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health.

See the signed [Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy](#) (in the Resources tab) for your OHS Noticeboard.

- The aim of the OHSMS is for principals to create healthy and safe workplaces by managing key risks in their school, with support from central and regional offices. See example policies below which may be applicable to your site and form part of the Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS):
  - [Asbestos Management](#)
  - [Chemical Management](#)
  - [Confined Spaces](#)
  - [Contractor OHS Management](#)
  - [Cooling Towers](#)
  - [Environmental Hygiene](#)
  - [Equipment Isolation and Tag Out](#)
  - [Ergonomics and Workspace](#)
  - [First Aid for Students and Staff](#)
  - [Hot Work](#)
  - [Manual Handling](#)
  - [Mental Health and Wellbeing — Employees](#)
  - [Noise Management](#)
  - [Occupational Violence and Aggression in Schools](#)
  - [OHS Purchasing](#)

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- Plant and Equipment Management
- Outdoor Activities and Working Outdoors
- Prevention of Falls when Working at Heights
- Reporting and Managing School Incidents (including emergencies)
- Slips, Trips and Falls
- Swimming Pools on School Grounds
- Testing and Tagging of Electrical Equipment
- Traffic Management
- Volunteer OHS Management
- Voice Care for Teachers
- Working Alone, in Isolation or from Home
- Workplace Bullying
- Workplace Inspection
- Work-related Driving

## Details

To assist schools create and maintain a healthy and safe working environment the Department has developed an Occupational Health and Safety Management System (OHSMS) that should be implemented in all schools.

The OHSMS outlines how schools can meet their health, safety and wellbeing obligations. The OHSMS is a translation of legislative and regulatory requirements for schools that need to be managed. The Employee Health, Safety and Wellbeing Division is responsible for updating the OHSMS and communicating changes. The image below outlines the key elements in the OHSMS to be implemented.

## Supports for schools to implement the OHSMS

The [Safe and Well in Education Strategy](#) outlines a five-year roadmap for the Department to systematically enhance and support health, safety and wellbeing outcomes for all of its employees. This includes new intensive supports for schools to manage OHS and workers compensation.

It works in conjunction with the [Safe and Well in Education Framework](#) to assist everyone at the Department understand their health, safety and wellbeing accountabilities and responsibilities, and the supports available to acquit those, to ultimately improve the performance of Victorian Government schools.

## The OHS Management System

### 1 Leadership

Local leadership of health, safety and wellbeing is crucial to delivering the Education State agenda — to give every Victorian the best learning and development experience, supported by positive climates for learning. Education excellence relies on the health and wellbeing of our staff. Their wellbeing contributes to

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a positive culture and maximises teaching and learning outcomes.

To manage health, safety and wellbeing in schools, principals (as the local management representative and site manager) have certain accountabilities including:

- Promoting health, safety and wellbeing
- Preventing risks and injuries, including through embedding appropriate school management and supervision practices for health, safety and wellbeing
- Identifying safety risks (also known as hazards)
- Managing risks, including by implementing controls using the hierarchy of controls
- Responding to risks/hazards, injuries and near misses, including reporting incidents for regional and central office support, and overseeing return to work for employees
- Consulting with employees regarding health, safety and wellbeing (including through Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), and a Health and Safety Committee, where applicable)
- Reviewing and continuously improving the management of health, safety and wellbeing at the school

To acquit these local leadership actions, principals (or their delegates) must implement OHSMS requirements for which they have control or responsibility. Where a delegate has been appointed, the principal must ensure that the individual has an appropriate level of authority (such as Assistant Principal or Business Manager) to be able to make decisions on OHS matters.

Employees must also perform their work safely and without risks to their health or others.

There are a range of central and regional office support to acquit these leadership actions, including the OHS Advisory Service. However, there are also key responsibilities for Principals outlined in each OHSMS policy that must be followed.

The Department also has duties to principals as employees, and is committed to their health, safety and wellbeing. Schools thrive when principals thrive.

For further information, refer to the Department's [Principal Health and Wellbeing Advice](#).

## **2 Capability**

The best approaches to leading health, safety and wellbeing include local leaders building strong capability in their people and processes. This feeds through to a resilient culture, and improved organisational performance. This is covered by the OHSMS elements of:

- OHS Planning
- OHS Consultation and Communication
- OHS Induction and Training

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## OHS Planning

Being proactive embeds the management of health, safety and wellbeing into normal school operations.

The principal and/or their delegate must use the [OHS Activities Calendar](#) template (or equivalent) to effectively plan and manage OHS based on their school's profile (for example the particular facilities and OHS hazards in the school). This will ensure that OHS activities are completed and recorded in a timely manner.

Refer to: [OHS Planning Policy](#)

## OHS Consultation and Communication

Being transparent and inclusive about the management of health, safety and wellbeing builds mutual trust.

The principal and/or their delegate must involve employees and Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) in proactive consultation around the identification and management of workplace hazards.

Refer to: [OHS Consultation and Communication Policy](#)

## OHS Induction and Training

Providing employees with an OHS induction introduces them to the culture and risk profile of the school. It also provides critical information relating to safety management and key people.

To supplement this, the provision and encouragement to attend training is also important as building employees' knowledge and capability is a critical component to having a healthy and safe workplace. The Department has a suite of eLearning modules and in-house training available to employees to improve health, safety and wellbeing capability:

- [OHS eLearning modules \(LearnED\)](#)
- [Safety Management for School Leaders \(Bastow\)](#)

Refer to: [OHS Induction and Training Policy](#)

## 3 Risk

Ensuring workplaces having a methodology for identifying and managing risks within their workplace is essential to effective safety management.

Refer to: [OHS Risk Management Policy](#)

Some identified risks are fairly similar across all our workplaces however, some are school type specific. The processes outlined in the OHSMS should allow for workplaces to scale the level of implementation of requirements based on your workplaces, size and location, number of employees and scale of facilities.

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The aim of the OHSMS is for principals to create healthy and safe workplaces by managing key risks in their school, with support from central and regional offices. Refer to example policies in Summary Critical information summary above.

#### 4 Continuous improvement

The Department is committed to reviewing health, safety and wellbeing Policies and Procedures every two years to ensure that we are adapting to the differing risk profiles of our workplaces and keeping up with contemporary methods and ensuring legislative compliance. We want to work with our people to set our objectives and to develop our support programs to achieve the best safety outcomes for our schools.

#### **Hazard alerts**

From time to time, the Department issues hazard alerts.

A hazard alert is designed to provide concise information in relation to serious incidents or current issues in Department workplaces. The alert provides guidance in relation to appropriate procedures, practices and controls that should be implemented.

See available hazard alerts in the [Resources](#) tab.

#### **Audit**

To inform our support programs and ensure schools are maintaining their compliance we have an established OHSMS auditing program. Following an audit at your school a principal should:

- complete corrective actions within the specified timeframes
- seek guidance from the OHS Advisory Service where necessary to identify corrective actions
- report completed corrective actions on the online system within the specified timeframes
- submit sufficient evidence on the online system to demonstrate that corrective actions have been completed

You can also contact your Regional OHS Support Officer for assistance pre or post audit, see the [Guidance](#) tab for contacts.

#### **Definitions**

##### **Hazard**

Anything with the potential to cause harm, injury, illness, or loss.

##### **Health and Safety Representative**

An elected employee responsible for representing employees within a DWG on matters relating to OHS.

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## **Hierarchy of Controls**

There are a number of ways that risks associated with hazards can be reduced however, the effectiveness of each method may vary. The prioritising of approaches in managing the risks associated with a hazard is called the hierarchy of controls and indicates the decreasing level of effectiveness of various approaches. The hierarchy of controls are:

- Eliminating the hazard at the source
- Substituting the hazard with something else that poses a lesser risk
- Isolating the hazard with an engineering control
- Implementing administrative controls and changing the way work is done
- Providing Personal Protective Equipment

Often a number of different approaches are used in conjunction with each other to provide a more effective risk treatment.

## **OHS Management System (OHSMS)**

OHS Management System is a set of plans, actions and procedures to systematically manage health and safety in the workplace. It is actively endorsed by a committed employer.

Relevant legislation

- [Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 \(Vic\)](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 \(Vic\)](#)

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