Excerpt from template version of

Safe Work Method Statement

The following excerpt shows the first two pages of the Tree Works Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS).

An efficient way of presenting the SWMS to the work crew of a small tree works business is to combine it with the HAC sheet (see separate template).

The HAC (Hazard Assessment Checklist) provides a site-specific risk assessment and also includes a section for writing up toolbox minutes. This allows the supervisor to perform all of the following functions on-site at the commencement of a job:

- site induction (and toolbox meeting with work crew)
- on-site risk assessment
- presentation of SWMS
- sign-on for crew members

The first two pages (HAC sheet) can then be put on file as a record of the meeting and the procedures that have been followed, and the SWMS can be returned to the vehicle, for use at the next job site.

In this case, the hard copy version of the SWMS would be kept in a folder in the vehicle glove box, together with a full set of Safe Operating Procedures for different machines and work tasks relevant to the business.

Modifications you may need to make

The SWMS template provides a typical description of the activities carried out on-site during normal tree works operations, together with control measures that would commonly be used to minimise the risks.

However, before you implement it as your own SWMS, all content material should be reviewed by everyone involved in the operations and customised to ensure that the descriptions are an accurate account of the way your business actually carries out these tasks.

Some of the text is shown in red to help you identify the material that may need to be changed. Note that the Acts and Regulations referenced in this document apply to NSW. If you work in a different state or territory, you will need to either delete these references or change them to the laws and regulations that apply.

Safe Work Method Statement

Company logo

This **Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS)** has been developed by **Company name**, in consultation with the company's supervisors, employees, contractors and industry experts. It is designed to comply with industry best practices, and meet all of the relevant Acts, Regulations, Industry Guidelines and **SafeWork NSW (or other WorkCover jurisdiction)** requirements, including the documents listed below. The SWMS is also designed to satisfy the company's specific WHS obligations under legislation relating to **High Risk Construction Work** (which includes: tree climbing, EWP operation and work in the vicinity of overhead powerlines).

Acts (applicable to state/territory)	**Regulations** (applicable to state/territory)	**Standards and Guidance sheets** (as required)
Work Health and Safety Act 2011	*Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017*	*AS 4373:2007 Pruning of Amenity Trees*
Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997	*Protection of the Environment Operations (General) Regulation 2021*	*Working in the vicinity of overhead and underground electric lines; Guide to Managing Risks of Tree Trimming and Removal Work* (Safe Work Aust)

The company's environmental care procedures are integrated into the WHS procedures, and built into the **SOPs** (Safe Operating Procedures) that apply to individual machines and tasks. All personnel working for or on behalf of the company are required to be signed off against the separate SOPs where they are relevant to the activity being undertaken, and hold all specified accreditations, licences, qualifications and authorisations relating to the task.

All personnel must also contribute to the site-specific risk assessment that is completed on every jobsite before work commences, and sign off against the **HAC sheet** (Hazard Assessment and Control Measures sheet). In signing and dating the HAC sheet, each person is verifying that they have participated in the risk assessment process, have understood their WHS and environmental care obligations, and have agreed to follow all procedures set out in the HAC sheet and SWMS.

The SWMS is monitored continuously and reviewed annually to ensure that it remains current with the latest legislation, worksite requirements and industry standards.

The **Risk rating table** shown at right is used to rate the relative risk levels in this SWMS.

The Risk columns on the following pages use the following terms:

- **Risk initial** (the risk before controls are implemented);
- **Risk resid** (the residual risk after controls are implemented).

RISK: LIKELIHOOD	**RISK: CONSEQUENCES**				
	Insignificant	**Minor**	**Moderate**	**Major**	**Catastrophic**
Almost certain	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
Likely	Medium	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
Possible	Low	Medium	High	Extreme	Extreme
Unlikely	Low	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
Rare	Low	Low	Medium	High	High

Activity	Hazards	Risk (initial)	Control measures	Risk (Resid)	Personnel responsible
Receive work instructions. Identify the scope of works and trees to be worked on.	Uneven ground, confined spaces, public areas with vehicle or pedestrian thoroughfares, nearby structures, environmental constraints, heritage orders.	H	Supervisor to ensure that the correct documentation is taken to site; that they are properly briefed by the client or principal contractor; and clarify any queries or seek further information. **Related documents: job sheets, quotations, client briefs**	L	Supervisor
Determine whether there are overhead powerlines near the tree (or trees) to be worked on. If there are, determine the voltage of the conductors. If an 'access authority' is required, notify the network operator.	Electrocution from contact with energised powerlines. Damage to conductors or other network infrastructure from falling branches or tree sections. Fires or flashovers caused by tree branches falling on live conductors.	E	All tree vegetation, personnel and equipment must remain outside the 'ordinary person's safe approach distances' – as specified in the network operator's Electrical Safety Rules – unless the climber and other personnel are authorised by the network operator to work near the conductors as vegetation controllers. For authorised vegetation control work near the conductors, the supervisor must notify the network operator and obtain an access authority. The work may also require an outage. **Related documents: network operator procedural docs**	M	Supervisor Climber
Carry out an on-site risk assessment. Check weather conditions for the day.	Not foresee the hazards that will apply to the job. Not implement appropriate controls.	E	Supervisor to monitor weather conditions. All workers must take part in the pre-start briefing. All workers must participate in the on-site risk assessment. **Related document: HAC sheet**	L	Supervisor All workers on-site
Decide whether the tree is safe to climb, or whether an EWP or other work method should be used.	Danger to tree climber and ground crew from dangerous trees. Possible environmental damage caused by EWP or other methods.	E	Inspect tree for serious climbing hazards. If the tree is too dangerous – do not climb. In that instance, talk to the client about alternative work arrangements, such as using an EWP or knuckle boom, or using a machine to remove the tree. **Related document: Hazard tree checklist**	M	Supervisor Climber/ EWP operator

There are 8 remaining pages in the full SWMS template document