

## RISK INFORMATION – CHURCHES WORKING BEES

Churches have responsibilities under WHS legislation to provide safe work places for employees, contractors and volunteers. This obligation extends to the conduct of Working Bees carried out by volunteers to maintain church property. Often such activity involves the use of hazardous equipment so extra vigilance is required. This information release sets out topics for consideration in conducting a risk assessment of a Working Bee.

### Planning and Preparation

- Has site hazard identification been completed, e.g. trip hazards?
- Have separate risk assessments been undertaken in respect of any hazardous chemicals or equipment that are to be used?
- Does the site adequately separate foot traffic from motorised vehicles and equipment?
- Is there an agreed plan to execute in the event of emergency, e.g. medical or environmental (include bush fire preparedness where relevant)?
- Has consideration been given to the type of equipment needed to perform the tasks to be undertaken; using equipment that minimises risk? For example: trolleys and wheelbarrows
- Has someone been appointed to oversee the Working Bee activities and workers?
- Has an induction been planned for all workers prior to commencing the Working Bee? Will children be present? What supervision standards will be implemented? Will leaders and supervisors have working with children certification?
- Do work plans include consideration of what to do if adverse weather is experienced, e.g. very hot, very cold, heavy rain and lightning?
- Is a well-stocked first aid kit available? Will trained first aid practitioners be present?

### Work Procedures

- For each type of equipment to be used, ensure that Safety Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed and communicated to operators of the equipment. Components of SOPs include:
  - The purpose of using the equipment
  - Relevant legislation or standards
  - Specific information about potential hazards and risks
  - Precautions required to eliminate or greatly reduce risks
  - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to wear while operating the machinery

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- Environment where the equipment should be used
- Clear and simple instructions on how to operate the equipment safely
- Clean-up, waste disposal and environmental measures
- Emergency procedures and shutdown
- For each activity to be undertaken, have the necessary steps been determined and communicated to volunteers? Care needs to be taken when undertaking tasks that do not involve use of plant and equipment, such as erecting sports equipment, marking grounds etc.

### Hazardous Equipment

- Has responsibility been assigned for ensuring all equipment is in good condition, safe and available for use?
- Do not remove any standard guards / maintain safety features, cut-off switches etc.
- Have operators of equipment been trained in the safe operation of the equipment?
- Have powered tools been regularly serviced?
- Have all power sources been tested and tagged, e.g. power boards, power leads, residual current devices? Is a safety switch in use?
- Are all power sources clear from water and foot traffic?
- Have traffic exclusion zones been planned for areas where equipment is to be operated?
- Equipment users must be appropriately licenced. This will include when driving on public roads where state licencing is required. Off-road driving may have different requirements; refer to the relevant state licencing authority. Some types of High Risk work require WorkSafe / WorkCover licencing (e.g. forklifts, cranes, rigging, hoists). Check with your local authority whether this form of licencing is required

### Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Where SOPs indicate use of PPE is required, use of PPE is mandatory.
- Have workers been provided with PPE suitable for the tasks to be undertaken, e.g. gloves, work shoes, safety glasses, ear protection?
- If working outside, will workers be provided with hats, shade, sunscreen and drinking water?

### Training

- Before any equipment is used for the first time, make sure that the operator is trained in the safe operation of the equipment (based on SOPs).

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### Working at Heights

- Will ladders be used? Ensure any users of ladders are provided with Working at Heights instruction. Users of ladders must always be assisted by having a second person securing the base of the ladder.
- If other equipment is to be used, e.g. scissor lifts, ensure operators of that equipment are trained and licenced where required.

### Food Safety

- If food is provided to workers, have associated risks been considered, e.g. food preparation and handling, allergic reactions etc.?

### Chemicals

- Dangerous materials (including: insecticides, pesticides, chemicals, gases, petrol, diesel & lubricants) must be securely stored while not being used. Appropriate Material Safety Data Sheets must be available for all such material to guide handling and usage of such materials.

### Other Matters.

Some other specific risks to be aware of and to take into account when undertaking risk assessments:

- Power take-offs on tractors or similar equipment can cause serious injury or death if care is not taken
- Risk of roll-over using tractors and quad bikes
- Leaking or burst hydraulic lines
- Hand-arm vibration syndrome arising from continued use of vibrating equipment
- Legionella infection from inhaling mulch or potting mix particles
- Poisoning from wrong use of chemicals
- Risk of bites / stings / cuts and grazes
- Risk of drowning where pools or dams are part of the facility
- Manual handling
- Slips, trips and falls
- Working at heights

Examples of powered maintenance equipment which might be used in your Working Bee:

- Tractors

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- Lawnmowers – push, walk behind, electric, ride-on
- Rollers / cultivators
- Slashers
- Forklifts
- Quad bikes
- Chainsaws
- Edgers
- Line trimmers / brush cutters
- Mulchers / chippers
- Blowers / vacuums
- Hedge trimmers and loppers
- Bench saws / grinders /power drills
- Welding equipment
- Cherry pickers and elevated work platforms

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### References

University of South Australia, “Safe Operating Procedure Development”

<http://w3.unisa.edu.au/ohsw/procedures/docs/safeoperating.pdf>

SA Department for Education and Child Development, example SOPs are available from:

<http://www.decd.sa.gov.au/hrhealthsafety/default.asp?id=41574&navgrp=3961>

Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, “Safety Operating Procedure for a Ride-on Mower”,

[https://www.google.com.au/?gws\\_rd=cr&ei=tw1eUtbhMdDDkAXG2YHQA#q=safety+operating+procedures+lawn+mower](https://www.google.com.au/?gws_rd=cr&ei=tw1eUtbhMdDDkAXG2YHQA#q=safety+operating+procedures+lawn+mower)

WorkCover Tasmania, “Safety Operating Procedure for Chainsaw – Petrol Operated”,

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WorkSafe Victoria, “Guide for Assessing and Fixing Noise Problems at Work”

<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/forms-and-publications/forms-and-publications/?a=22683>

VicRoads, “Guidelines for Traffic Controllers”,

<http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/813F313B-C645-4B1D-B3E9-F76F33D90FFD/0/VRPIN008901.pdf>