

Workplace Hazards in Plumbing

This fact sheet is for students undertaking work experience programs, and for their host employers. It can be used as a tool to assist with task planning, and to develop appropriate induction, training and supervision to minimise any risk to students while they are 'at work'.

Students must be given instruction, and must be supervised at all times. Consideration must always be given to hazards when allocating tasks. If any risk exists, students must NOT undertake the activity.

Hazard	Possible Harmful Effects	Possible Employer Action to Prevent Injury / Illness	Preventative Action Students Can Take
Powered and non-powered tools; hand tools	Electrocution Being struck by broken drill bits, cutters, swarf (potential for serious eye, head or facial injury) – cuts and lacerations	Students must NOT operate powered tools ♦ Provide instruction in safe use of hand tools	Students must NOT operate powered tools ♦ Use hand tools safely according to instructions
Working at heights (including use of mobile plant, ladders)	Falls from heights	Students must NOT work at heights where there is any risk of a fall	Students must NOT work where there is risk of a fall
Electrical – e.g. overhead lines or insulated hot water pipe with a 240 volt Heat Trace line attached to it	Electrocution or shock could be fatal	Students must NOT undertake any task which may place them at risk from electrical sources ♦ Make sure students are informed of potential electrical hazards	Students must NOT undertake any task which may place them at risk from electrical sources
Dangerous goods and hazardous substances, eg. natural gas, oxy-acetylene, glues and fixatives, solvent	Contact with dangerous goods could result in fatality or serious injury (burns, inhalation of fumes, chemical splash)	♦ Assess work area before commencing work ♦ Establish and communicate First Aid and emergency procedures ♦ Provide First Aid kit	♦ Know the dangerous goods and hazardous substances you could be exposed to ♦ If you are in any doubt, seek advice before commencing a task
Manual handling (bending, reaching, pulling, lifting, repetitive motions, awkward posture)	Musculoskeletal disorders	♦ Provide mechanical aids where practicable ♦ Provide training in safe manual handling techniques	♦ Use mechanical aids ♦ Seek help when you think a team lift is required ♦ Exercise: warm up/stretch before starting, and cool down/stretch at end of the shift or working day
Poorly maintained heating, ventilation and air conditioning	Legionnaires Disease (contracting the disease can be fatal)	♦ Document safe work procedures ♦ Provide appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)	♦ Follow safe work procedures ♦ Use PPE provided
Trenches, confined spaces	Suffocation Illness (including hepatitis) from working on sewerage systems	Students must NOT enter trenches or confined spaces ♦ Document safe work procedures including hygiene requirements ♦ Provide appropriate PPE	Students must NOT enter trenches or confined spaces ♦ Follow safe work and hygiene procedures ♦ Use PPE provided
Hot weather conditions	Heat rashes, heat cramps, heat stress, dehydration, sunburn	♦ Provide regular rest breaks ♦ Re-schedule work if extreme weather conditions present risk	♦ Dress appropriately for the conditions ♦ Take scheduled breaks
Needle sticks from syringes	Blood-borne diseases	♦ Document safe work procedures ♦ Provide appropriate PPE	♦ Follow safe work procedures ♦ Use PPE provided
Sexual harassment, work place bullying	Emotional stress, fear and anxiety, physical illness	♦ Establish work place policy ♦ Provide staff briefings or training	♦ Report any concerns immediately

