

## S21 – Opening Statement

### Permit to Work

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Some tasks are inherently hazardous. To ensure that the hazards have been correctly controlled it may be appropriate to operate a permit to work system.

A permit to work is a very important document and is often misinterpreted and misused. It is not a replacement for a risk assessment but an addition to such a process.

This procedure will help managers identify what tasks require a permit to work, who is responsible for and can raise and close a permit, and the role the contractor or maintenance personnel play.

The procedure comes with a task identification register and a permit to work template.



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### What is this?

This is a written procedure which covers all aspects of a permit to work system, and provides detailed information on its implementation within the workplace.

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### The person responsible for implementing this procedure is:

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### What is a permit to work?

A permit to work is a formal written system used to control certain activities which pose a significant risk. It is a document that specifies the work to be carried out, and the precautions that should be taken to minimise any associated risk.

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### Which activities require a permit to work?

With the support of employees, **responsible managers** should identify both the tasks involved with, and the areas of the plant that present the greatest risks, and decide where they feel a permit to work is required. It is important that the tasks are displayed on the site notice board. However, all the information should be made accessible by displaying suitable signage on all plant identified as requiring a permit to work.

A permit to work should be considered for the following:

- Confined space entry;
- Working on or near unguarded moving machinery;
- Working at height without secure edge protection;
- Working on high voltage or complex electrical equipment;
- Excavations in or around plant and equipment;
- Conveyor tracking with guards removed;
- Hot work;
- Any maintenance activity involving potential exposure to asbestos;
- Any other activity which has been identified through a risk assessment as being potentially hazardous.

**Note:** Permits apply whether you are using contractors, sub-contractors or employees.

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### Authorising a permit to work

The responsible manager must display an up to date list of all persons who are authorised to sign and issue a permit to work document. It is compulsory that those nominated to issue permit to work documents are trained to do so and are deemed competent.



## Issuing and receiving a permit to work

The authorised person who issues the permit must ensure:

- The person in charge of the task fully understands the requirements of the permit;
- He/she explains the precautions and procedures to all others involved;
- He/she acknowledges any concerns the receiver of the permit has, and acts immediately to either rectify the situation or raise it to a higher authority.

The person receiving the permit must:

- Ensure that only the task specified on the permit is undertaken;
- Abide by all relevant safe system of work instructions;
- Report back to the authorised person if any changes have taken place which result in the permit becoming invalid (i.e. the receiver of the permit leaving site).

**Before a Permit can be issued, several factors need to be considered:**

**What is being done?** A specific risk assessment and safe system of work needs to be available for all activities that require a permit to work. All employees and contractors should be made aware of potential dangers that could arise through their work. The task should be discussed by the authorised person, the person receiving the permit and any other involved parties.

**Where is it being done?** For the area of the works in question, consideration should be given to the following:

- The area is clearly visible to all persons;
- Suitable barriers and signage are displayed and remain in place for the duration of the works;
- All persons involved or who could potentially be affected by the works are made aware of any risks and control measures.

**What is being used?** All machinery and equipment that presents a significant risk must be isolated to nullify the hazards **BEFORE THE PERMIT IS ISSUED**. Multi-hasp locking systems and interlocking systems require careful monitoring and key security. Area demarcation that prevents mobile plant and unauthorised personnel access to the area must also be considered. All other tools and equipment used must be identified as being 'fit for purpose' as specified in the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations.

**Who is doing it?** The most significant factor in the occurrence of accidents and incidents is the participation of people. It is imperative that only competent persons undertake any task or activity. An individual should never undertake a task if he/she has not received training or authorisation to do so.

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## Personal protective equipment

All personal protective equipment required to undertake the task safely must be made available and used. Personnel not working in the area but who may possibly be affected must be considered, e.g. in the vicinity of arc welding or noise.

PPE must be suitable for the task **and specified in the permit**. Some items of PPE require test certificates and must be inspected by authorised personnel. All PPE must be inspected by users prior to use. Any person using specific PPE must be adequately trained in its correct use.



## Extended time

The permit to work must specify the time limitation of the task. If the task is not completed within that time, the person who received the permit must stop the task. The authorised person can then either:

- Endorse the permit with a revised task duration; or
- Cancel the permit and issue a new one if appropriate.

**Note:** If the area is to be left for any length of time, barriers and signs to prevent unauthorised entry may need to be present and/or sentries posted.

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## Hand back of permit

Before a permit is handed back, the authorised person must ensure that the work has been completed and that the whole area is safe; only after this can the permit be signed off.

If the work has not been completed (even after an extension of time endorsement), then the authorised person must suspend the work, and ensure that the workforce are withdrawn from the area prior to contacting the responsible manager.

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## Change of person in charge

If the receiver of the permit needs to hand over his/her responsibilities to another person the work must be suspended immediately. The workforce must be withdrawn and the site left in a safe condition. The authorised person must be contacted to cancel the permit and decide on further action.

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## Emergency procedures

Due to the increased risks involved in activities requiring a permit to work, it is essential that site-specific emergency procedures are in place that can adequately deal with the potential consequences if things go wrong. All involved in the activity must fully understand the emergency procedure and their responsibilities for implementing them. For emergency purposes, contact telephone numbers must be listed on the permit to work document.

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## Review

A review of the entire operation is beneficial once it has been completed to evaluate the overall performance of the contractors and the effectiveness of the permit to work arrangements.

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## Associated documentation

- Permit to work form
- Permit to work register



## Permit to work flowchart

