



This summary is to help employers and workers in the sugar cane sector understand their legal **Work Health and Safety (WHS)** responsibilities and to easily access important information to help meet these requirements. A more complete guide can be found here: <https://rirdc.infoservices.com.au/items/14-088>

Work Health and Safety legislation has been adopted in both New South Wales and Queensland resulting in laws that are almost identical.

Responsibilities

Employers (Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking - PCBU) and workers (employees & contractors) all have responsibilities for a safe workplace.

The critical responsibility of an **employer (PCBU)** is to provide a safe workplace and ensure the safety of all those who work or visit the farm.

In the same way, **workers** (employees & contractors) have responsibility to:

- take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for that of others
- comply with reasonable instruction and cooperating with policies and procedures (e.g. training, use of personal protective equipment).

Case Study - Cane harvesting

A cane bin was overloaded by the harvesting contractor which caused it to derail when it moved along the train line. The owner of the cane farm, who was well experienced in the operation, was driving the tractor at the siding to move a cane bin back onto the lines.

A second worker was at the siding, of which the tractor operator was not aware. When the bin was moved back onto the rails, the second worker was hit by the bin.

The worker received severe injuries to their leg which required surgery and extensive rehabilitation.

Following investigation by the WHS Inspector, it was found that the cane farmer and the harvest contractor both had an effective WHS policy in place; both entities had provided safety inductions to their workers in consultation with the sugar mill. The second worker has disregarded the information they had been provided and did not follow the policy of positive communication required at the siding.

This case study illustrates the importance and benefits of having a system in place and ensuring that it is implemented. Not only does it reduce incidents and lost productivity, it also strengthens compliance with legal WHS requirements and assists in preventing further prosecution and fines.



HOW DO WE MANAGE WHS?

An effective approach to [Managing Risks to Health and Safety](#) consists of:

- (a) Identifying hazards
- (b) Assessing risks
- (c) Controlling risks
- (d) Reviewing control measures
- (e) Keeping records of the steps you take

You are required to develop a **WHS plan** that brings together all of the parts necessary to address safety in a systematic way and meets your WHS legal requirements.

In developing your farm WHS plan, you must include the following:

- *Management commitment* - clearly outline your own responsibilities and those of any workers; provide resources to meet those responsibilities; get involved
- *Consultation* - involve your workers when identifying and addressing safety issues
- *Management of hazards and risk* - identify tasks that are a risk for workers, take action to control these risks and develop simple procedures to manage risks where they cannot be eliminated
- *Training and instruction* - train workers in safe work procedures and make sure they are followed
- *Reporting safety* - have a system for reporting hazards, near-misses and incidents; act upon these
- *Return to work and workers compensation* - make sure all workers are covered by a worker's compensation policy with an injury notification system in place and return to work program

There is also a range of other issues that need to be included in your WHS Plan such as confined spaces (e.g. irrigation pumps), electrical safety, emergency plans, hazardous chemicals, safety induction for new workers, contractor management, working at heights, plant and equipment etc.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR RISKS?

The injury evidence indicates the high-risk issues on sugar cane farms include: cane firing (burns), cane harvesters (collision/runover), electricity (overhead powerlines), farm utes (collisions), haul out trucks (collisions), quads (collisions/ falls/ rollover), PTO drives, tractors (rollover/ runover/ collisions), trains (collisions), tyre repair (crush under vehicle) and water (irrigation channels / wells).

WHAT RECORDS DO WE NEED TO KEEP?

Record keeping is essential to maximise the effectiveness of your safety system and also to provide concrete evidence of how you have managed safety which will be required if an injury event occurs. There are a number of records that should be maintained on sugar cane farms (e.g. induction, training etc). Examples of all registers required for record keeping on sugar cane farms are available at the [Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety website](#).

WHERE CAN I GET MORE HELP WITH WHS?

The most complete source of industry information for cane growers is available from the [Smartcane BMP \(Canegrowers\) website](#).

Further industry specific information is available from:

[Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety](#)

[Canegrowers](#)

[Sugar Research Australia](#)

Additional assistance can also be gained from your relevant state / territory Work Health Authority on the following numbers. Both NSW and Queensland will provide free assistance to help you with WHS issues:

• [WorkCover NSW](#)

• [Workplace Health and Safety QLD \(Enquiry form\)](#)

