

High-risk construction work changes – for workers

Changes to work health and safety regulations will reduce the working at height threshold for high-risk construction work **from three metres to two metres** from 1 July 2026.

Why the change?

The change has been introduced to **reduce the number of serious falls** in construction and to ensure work at heights is properly assessed and controlled.

- » Aligns South Australia with model WHS laws and other Australian states and territories to create clearer more consistent expectations
- » Between 2020 – 2022, almost 150 workers fell more than two metres, with over 100 of these in residential construction
- » Two thirds of falls occurred between two and three metres, the range now captured under the new threshold
- » Aims to reduce preventable harm by strengthening planning and safety requirements where most injuries occur

What this means for you

Whether you're a sole trader, labourer, apprentice or contractor, any work at height above two metres will now be classed as high risk construction work.

This means a Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) must be in place before you start high risk construction work.

The SWMS needs to:

- » **Be specific** to your site and task
- » **Identify hazards** and risks involved
- » **Describe** the control measures that will be used keep you safe

You must follow the SWMS, and your person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) must make sure you:

- » Understand the SWMS
- » Are provided with the right equipment and training
- » Carry out the work in accordance with the control measures

Your right to a safe workplace

You are entitled to:

- » Ask for the SWMS if you haven't been shown it
- » Stop work if something changes and the job becomes unsafe
- » Report any concerns or hazards without fear of negative treatment

Remember: Risk exists at any height. PCBUs must always manage fall hazards – even below two metres.

Transition period

These changes take effect from **1 July 2026**, giving workers and PCBUs time to prepare, update procedures, and ensure safe systems of work are in place before the new threshold applies.

Why it matters

Falls from heights remain one of the leading causes of serious injury and death in the construction industry.

Lowering the threshold focuses attention where the majority of falls actually occur, particularly in residential construction, helping prevent injuries before they happen.

More Information

Visit safework.sa.gov.au for guidance materials, training and information on the amended regulations.



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