

Critical Construction Hazards

Accreditation Readiness Workbook | August 2026

Practical guidance and tools for residential and construction businesses preparing for OFSC WHS Accreditation.



How to use this workbook

Understand what strong critical-hazard control looks like, test current readiness and build a stronger field evidence trail.

PURPOSE

Use this workbook to identify applicable critical construction hazards, strengthen safe systems and controls, verify field implementation and prepare teams for audit conversations.

What you should get from it

- ▶ A clear method for identifying which OFSC [Hazard](#) Criteria apply to the project.
- ▶ Project-specific safe systems and critical controls for relevant high-risk work.
- ▶ Field checks for heights, temporary works, excavation, electrical and mobile plant where applicable.
- ▶ Stop, review and escalation triggers when controls fail or conditions change.
- ▶ Evidence linking Hazard Identification Risk Assessment & Control (HIRAC), Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS)/permits, inspections, actions and follow-up.

A simple way to work through the resource

01

UNDERSTAND

Know what accreditation-ready critical-hazard control looks like.

02

CHECK

Test your current systems and evidence.

03

STRENGTHEN

Use the practical tools to close priority gaps.

04

EVIDENCE

Build a traceable record of implementation.

05

PREPARE

Practise the conversations people may need to have at audit.

IMPORTANT

OFSC accreditation does not replace State or Territory WHS/OHS legislation. Hazard-specific laws, Codes, standards, engineering requirements and regulator guidance continue to apply. This workbook focuses on additional OFSC hazard-control and implementation evidence a builder may need to demonstrate. It is a readiness resource and does not guarantee accreditation or legal compliance.

DISCLAIMER

Readiness resource only. Confirm current OFSC criteria and the WHS/OHS requirements applying in each project jurisdiction, including emergency, first aid, exposure monitoring, health surveillance, hazardous chemicals, incident notification and investigation requirements.

Why critical construction hazards matter

For OFSC accreditation, having a SWMS or generic hazard procedure on file is not enough. The builder needs to identify which Hazard Criteria apply to the project and demonstrate that the relevant critical controls are selected, implemented, inspected and maintained in the field.

The [Residential Builders'](#) includes hazard-specific criteria. For residential construction, commonly relevant areas include working at heights, structural alterations/temporary support structures, excavation, electrical and mobile plant, but applicability depends on the actual project scope and risks.

ACCREDITATION LENS

The audit tests whether hazard controls move from documented HIRAC and safe systems into actual work. Auditors may select applicable high-risk activities and verify design/engineering inputs, SWMS or permits, competency, inspections, plant/equipment condition, exclusion zones and corrective actions against what is happening on site.

What this means in practice

APPLICABLE	The project identifies which Hazard Criteria and hazard-specific requirements apply to the actual scope of work.
SPECIFIC	HIRAC, SWMS, permits and controls reflect the task, location, sequence, interfaces and changing site conditions.
ENGINEERED	Where design, temporary works or specialist technical controls are required, current approved information is available and followed.
VERIFIED	Critical controls are physically checked before and during work, not assumed from paperwork.
FOLLOWED THROUGH	Defects, missing controls and changed conditions trigger stop/review/escalation, action close-out and effectiveness checks.

Where this category maps to the OFSC guide

- ▶ Applicable OFSC Hazard Criteria - selected according to project scope and risk, not treated as a fixed checklist for every project.
- ▶ Common residential examples include H1 Working at Heights, H5 Structural Alterations/Temporary Support Structures, H7 Excavation, H12 Electrical and H16 Mobile Plant.
- ▶ Risk Management & Safe Design (Book 2) should provide the HIRAC and design-risk method. This workbook focuses on hazard-specific implementation and field evidence.
- ▶ Confirm the current OFSC Residential Builders' Guide and the jurisdictional requirements that apply before relying on any hazard-specific control.

What good looks like

Compare your current practice with stronger accreditation-ready practice. The aim is to connect project planning, performance, inspections, audits and critical controls to what is actually happening on site.

AREA	WEAK / INFORMAL PRACTICE	STRONGER ACCREDITATION-READY PRACTICE
Hazard applicability	The same hazard checklist is used on every project.	The project identifies applicable Hazard Criteria from scope, HIRAC, design, methods and site conditions.
Work at heights	A SWMS and harnesses are available.	Falls are eliminated or minimised using higher-order controls; access, edge protection, scaffolds/Elevating Work Platform (EWPs) and rescue arrangements are verified.
Temporary works	Formwork/scaffold information is filed.	Design/engineering, erection/dismantling, stability, inspection and handover requirements are current and followed.
Excavation & services	A permit or service plan exists.	Ground/support, falls, access, underground services, plant interaction and inspection controls reflect current excavation conditions.
Electrical	Test/tag records are available.	Electrical supply, temporary installations, RCDs, leads/equipment, exclusion and inspection/testing controls are managed for actual site conditions.
Mobile plant	Plant is registered and operators are licensed.	Plant risk, onboarding, inspection/maintenance, competency, traffic management, exclusion and pedestrian interaction are controlled and observed in the field.

Your four readiness levels

Use the level that best describes the consistency and evidence behind your critical construction hazard controls.

1

NONE AT ALL | Establish

What it means: Applicable Hazard Criteria are not clearly identified and critical controls are inconsistent or largely paper-based.

Your focus: Identify applicable hazards, define safe systems, responsibilities, critical controls and evidence expectations.

2

GETTING STARTED | Implement

What it means: Hazard procedures and SWMS exist, but controls may be generic or field verification is inconsistent.

Your focus: Make hazard controls project/task-specific and start retaining implementation evidence.

3

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS | Embed

What it means: Core controls are established, but consistency across projects, subcontractors or changing conditions needs strengthening.

Your focus: Standardise critical-control verification and follow-through across applicable work.

4

STRENGTHENING IMPLEMENTATION | Assure and improve

What it means: Critical-hazard systems are operating and field evidence is available.

Your focus: Analyse repeated control failures, test effectiveness and improve safe systems and assurance.

DO NOT TREAT A HIGH SCORE AS COMPLETION

A strong diagnostic result means the business appears to have stronger foundations. Formal accreditation still depends on the OFSC application and on-site audit process.

Critical Construction Hazards Readiness Check

Use Yes / Partly / No and note the evidence you can actually produce. If you answer Yes but cannot locate current project evidence, treat the item as Partly until the evidence trail is clear.

#	READINESS QUESTION	Y / P / N	POSSIBLE EVIDENCE
1	Has the project identified which OFSC Hazard Criteria are applicable to its actual scope and risks?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Project HIRAC; hazard applicability review; WHS plan
2	Are hazard-specific safe systems, SWMS/permits and critical controls defined before relevant work starts?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	SWMS; permits; procedures; critical-control checklist
3	Are design/engineering requirements for temporary works or structural support current, approved and available where required?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Designs; certificates; engineer reviews; handover records
4	Are work-at-height controls selected using the hierarchy of control and verified in the field where applicable?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Risk assessment; SWMS; scaffold/EWP/edge protection inspections
5	Are excavation stability, access, falls, services and plant interaction controls verified where applicable?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Excavation plan/permit; services info; inspections; exclusion controls
6	Are electrical installations/equipment and related inspection/testing controls managed for actual site conditions?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Electrical register; Residual Current Device) RCD/testing records; temporary supply inspections
7	Are mobile plant risks, onboarding, maintenance and interaction controls established before plant operates?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Plant risk assessment; onboarding; maintenance; traffic plan
8	Are workers/operators competent and authorised for the hazard-specific work or plant they undertake?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Licences; VoC; competency/authorisation records
9	Are critical controls physically verified before and during relevant high-risk work?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Critical-control checks; inspections; observations
10	Are subcontractor hazard controls reviewed against builder/project requirements before work?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	SWMS review; mobilisation record; risk review
11	Do changed conditions, design, sequence, plant or interfaces trigger stop and risk review?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Change record; revised HIRAC/SWMS; toolbox/prestart

12	Are defects or missing critical controls assigned, corrected and verified before work continues where necessary?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Stop-work/escalation record; action close-out; reinspection
13	Are hazard inspections and assurance frequencies defined for applicable high-risk activities?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Inspection schedule; hold points; completed checks
14	Are emergency/rescue arrangements linked to hazard-specific scenarios such as falls, electrical contact or plant incidents?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Emergency plan; rescue plan; drill/briefing record
15	Can an applicable hazard be traced from HIRAC and safe system through field verification, action close-out and review?	Yes [] Partly [] No []	Linked risk, SWMS/permit, inspection, action and review records

USE THE EVIDENCE TEST

If a plan, schedule, procedure or hazard standard exists but you cannot locate recent project evidence showing implementation and verification, treat the item as Partly until the evidence trail is clear.

Tool 1: Roles & accountability

Use this matrix to define who owns project performance reporting, WHS plan review, inspections, audits and verification of critical construction hazards.

ROLE	WHAT THEY ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR	EVIDENCE TO RETAIN
Director / CEO / Managing Director	Set expectations and resources for critical-hazard control; review systemic or material failures.	Management review; resource decisions; escalations; actions.
Construction / Operations Manager	Ensure applicable hazards are identified across projects; review high-risk work, temporary works and repeated control issues.	Project reviews; hazard assurance; engineering/escalation records.
WHS Manager / Adviser	Maintain hazard-control criteria and assurance tools; support technical/legal checks; analyse recurring findings.	Procedures; assurance criteria; inspections; trend analysis.
Project Manager	Identify applicable hazards; coordinate design/engineering, subcontractor controls and project verification.	Project HIRAC; WHS plan; design/permit records; inspections.
Site Manager / Supervisor	Verify critical controls before/during work; stop or escalate when controls are missing or conditions change.	Prestarts; critical-control checks; SWMS observations; permits; actions.
Workers / Subcontractors	Follow safe systems and critical controls; report defects/changes; stop work where required and provide task/plant evidence.	SWMS participation; licences/VoC; prestarts; hazard reports; feedback.

MINIMUM DECISIONS TO DEFINE

Define how applicable Hazard Criteria are identified; who approves hazard-specific safe systems; when engineering or specialist input is required; what controls are critical; verification frequency/hold points; who can authorise restart after a critical-control failure; and how changes trigger review.

Tool 2: Critical hazard assurance review

Use this review to test which critical construction hazards apply, whether safe systems and critical controls are defined, and whether field verification, change and corrective actions demonstrate those controls remain effective.

AGENDA ITEM	QUESTIONS TO ASK	DECISION / ACTION
Hazard applicability	Which Hazard Criteria apply to current and upcoming work? Has scope or sequence changed?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Work at heights	Are higher-order fall controls, access and rescue arrangements suitable and verified?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Temporary works	Are current design/engineering, stability, inspection and handover controls in place?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Excavation & services	Are ground/support, access, services, falls and plant interaction controls effective?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Electrical	Are temporary supply, RCD, equipment, testing and site-use controls current?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Mobile plant	Are plant risk, maintenance, competency and people/plant interaction controls effective?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
SWMS / permits	Do current documents match actual location, sequence, plant and interfaces?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Critical-control verification	Which controls must not fail and what assurance shows they are present and effective?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Change / failure	What recent change or control failure triggered stop, review or escalation?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____
Trends & improvement	What repeated hazard findings require a project or builder-level system change?	Owner: _____ Due: _____ Evidence: _____

Tool 3: Critical hazard site verification

Use this site-based check to verify that the documented WHSMS and hazard controls are visible in actual work. Select hazards relevant to the project rather than treating every hazard as applicable.

Project		Reviewer	
Date		Site contact	

Ask, observe and verify

FOCUS	PROMPT	NOTES / ACTION
Applicable hazards	What critical construction hazards are present today and which controls must not fail?	
Work at heights	Observe applicable height work. Are access, edge/scaffold/EWP controls and rescue arrangements consistent with the safe system?	
Temporary works	Check current design/engineering, erection/dismantling status, stability and inspection/handover evidence.	
Excavation / services	Verify collapse/fall controls, service information, access and plant exclusion/interaction controls.	
Electrical	Check temporary supply/equipment condition, RCD/testing controls and safe use in the actual work area.	
Mobile plant	Verify plant onboarding, prestart/maintenance, operator competency, traffic and exclusion controls.	
SWMS / work as done	Select one high-risk activity. Does actual work match the SWMS/permit and critical controls?	
Critical control change	What happens if a control is missing, work changes or a control fails? Show a recent stop/review/escalation example if available.	

EVIDENCE TO KEEP

Record hazards and safe systems reviewed, site observations, engineering/permit/SWMS evidence, critical-control checks, discussions, corrective actions, escalations and follow-up.

Build your evidence chain

For each requirement, connect the documented process to a recent project implementation record. Strong evidence is traceable from expectation, to field implementation, to verification and improvement.

01	02	03	04
EXPECTATION	IMPLEMENTATION	EVIDENCE	REVIEW

Accreditation evidence map

REQUIREMENT	DOCUMENTED PROCESS	IMPLEMENTATION TEST	POSSIBLE EVIDENCE
Hazard applicability	Project HIRAC / hazard-selection process	Applicable Hazard Criteria identified for current scope	Project HIRAC; WHS plan; hazard review
Working at heights	Falls risk / safe system	Higher-order controls and access/rescue arrangements present in field	SWMS; scaffold/EWP/edge protection records; observations
Temporary works / structural support	Design, erection, inspection and handover process	Current engineered information followed and stability verified	Designs; certificates; scaffold/formwork/temporary-works inspections
Excavation / services	Excavation and services safe system	Stability, access, falls, services and plant interactions controlled	Risk assessment; permit/plan; services info; inspections
Electrical	Electrical management process	Temporary supply and electrical equipment inspected/tested and used safely	Electrical register; RCD/testing; inspection records
Mobile plant	Plant management / traffic process	Plant assessed, maintained, operated by competent people and separated from others	Plant risk assessment; onboarding; maintenance; traffic plan; VoC
SWMS / permits	High-risk work control process	Documents match actual work and are understood before work	SWMS review; permit; prestart/toolbox; field observation
Critical-control verification	Assurance / inspection process	Critical controls checked at defined points and failures stop/escalate work	Hold-point check; inspection; stop-work record; escalation
Change & improvement	HIRAC/change/corrective-action process	Changed conditions and repeated failures lead to revised controls	Revised HIRAC/SWMS; action register; effectiveness check; trend review

Auditor lens: questions to be ready for

The goal is not scripted answers. Project teams should be able to explain which critical hazards apply, what controls must not fail, how those controls are verified in the field and what happens when conditions change or a control fails.

WHO	PRACTICE QUESTION
Senior leader	How do you know the business has identified and is controlling the critical hazards across current projects?
Project manager	Which OFSC Hazard Criteria apply to this project and how did you determine that?
Site manager	What are the controls that must not fail for today's highest-risk work? Show me how they are verified.
Supervisor	Show a current SWMS or permit and demonstrate that the work being done matches it.
Worker / subcontractor	What would make you stop or change this work if a critical control failed or site conditions changed?
Project / engineer	Show current design/engineering and inspection evidence for applicable temporary works or structural support.
Plant operator / supervisor	Show how this plant was assessed, onboarded, maintained and how operator competency was verified.
Senior leader / WHS	What recurring critical-hazard findings have caused a builder-level system or control change?

Common gaps to look for

- ▶ The project uses a generic hazard checklist rather than identifying which OFSC Hazard Criteria actually apply to the work.
- ▶ SWMS or permits exist, but the controls are not specific to the location, sequence, interfaces or current site conditions.
- ▶ Critical controls are listed in documents but are not physically verified before or during high-risk work.
- ▶ Temporary works or structural support information is incomplete, out of date or not linked to erection, inspection and handover in the field.
- ▶ Changes in design, plant, sequencing or site conditions do not consistently trigger stop, review and revised hazard controls.
- ▶ Hazard defects or missing critical controls are closed administratively without checking that the control is restored and effective.
- ▶ Plant, temporary works, excavation, electrical or work-at-height records are held separately with no clear link to project HIRAC, SWMS/permits and field assurance.

Your 30 / 60 / 90-day action plan

Choose only the highest-value gaps. The purpose is to create a credible evidence trail quickly, not to generate unnecessary documents.

WHEN	PRIORITY ACTION	OWNER	DUE	EVIDENCE OF COMPLETION
0-30 days				
31-60 days				
61-90 days				

TIP

Prioritise actions that strengthen field implementation of the controls that prevent fatal and serious incidents. Use existing HIRAC, SWMS, permits, engineering, plant, inspection and action records wherever they already demonstrate the required activity.

Suggested sequence if you are starting from a low score

Build the critical-hazard system in a logical order, then test whether the documented safe systems and critical controls can be demonstrated on a live project.

FIRST	Identify the Hazard Criteria applicable to each active project and define the critical controls for current high-risk work.
SECOND	Confirm safe systems, engineering/technical inputs, SWMS/permits, competency and emergency arrangements are current.
THIRD	Set critical-control verification frequencies, hold points and stop/review/escalation triggers.
FOURTH	Verify selected hazard controls in the field against actual work and close significant findings with effectiveness checks.
FIFTH	Review 60 to 90 days of hazard verification and incident/near-miss evidence and correct recurring or systemic control failures.

READINESS TEST

At the end of 90 days, select one applicable critical construction hazard on an active project and trace it from project HIRAC and hazard criteria, through design/SWMS/permit requirements, to field verification, corrective-action close-out and review. Any break in that chain is your next improvement priority.

How to use this workbook with the WHS Readiness Diagnostic

DIAGNOSTIC RESULT	USE THIS WORKBOOK TO...
None at All	Identify applicable critical hazards and establish minimum safe systems, responsibilities and evidence.
Getting Started	Make hazard controls project/task-specific and start retaining field verification evidence.
Building the Foundations	Test consistency across projects and verify critical controls and corrective actions work in the field.
Strengthening Implementation	Use assurance trends and repeated control findings to improve critical-hazard systems and field reliability.

Reference points and use notes

Keep the resource proportionate, use existing records wherever possible and confirm current requirements before relying on this workbook.

Primary [OFSC](#) reference

Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner, WHS Accreditation Scheme Audit Criteria: Residential Builders' Guide. Relevant criteria for this workbook are WH12.1-WH12.7 and FP2.1-FP2.4. The Guide emphasises both documented process and evidence of effective implementation.

Housing Australia context

The OFSC provides specific guidance for residential and head contractor builders tendering for Housing Australia funding under the [Housing Australia Future Fund](#) and National Housing Accord Facility (NHAF). Depending on the project and applicable exemptions, the Scheme may require the head contractor builder to be accredited before Housing Australia can fund the building work.

KEEP IT PROPORTIONATE

Not every Hazard Criterion applies to every residential project. Identify what is relevant to the actual scope and risks, then use existing HIRAC, SWMS, permits, engineering, plant and inspection records where they demonstrate the required activity. Add only the assurance and traceability needed to show implementation and effectiveness.

Primary [OFSC](#) reference

- ▶ Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner, WHS Accreditation Scheme Audit Criteria: Residential Builders' Guide. Apply the Hazard Criteria relevant to the project scope and risk. Common residential examples include H1 Working at Heights, H5 Structural Alterations/Temporary Support Structures, H7 Excavation, H12 Electrical and H16 Mobile Plant. Confirm current criteria before use. [Auditing | Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner](#)
- ▶ Safe Work Australia managing risks [Identify, assess and control hazards - Managing risks | Safe Work Australia](#)