

## Permit to Work Systems

Permit to work systems can be an integral part of a safe system of work and are widely used to manage temporary high-risk activities. Permits are an essential part of the system, which determines how a job can be carried out safely, and help to communicate the hazards and risk controls to those doing the job.

### Essential elements of a permit to work system

Make sure the permit to work system within your workplace accounts for:

- **Display** – copies of a permit to work should be clearly displayed at the work site, or in an alternative recognised location.
- **Suspension** – suspended permits should note the condition in which plant or equipment has been left.
- **Permit interaction** – those involved with issuing permits should ensure that the work to be carried out takes account of other activity currently planned or underway when preparing the permit.
- **Handover** – work-in-progress should be left in a condition that can be reliably communicated to, and understood by, the oncoming shift.
- **Hand-back** – confirm that the work has been completed, that the plant or equipment has been returned to a safe condition, and that it is safe.
- **Permit authorisation and supervision** – permits must be coordinated and controlled by the person issuing the permit or other responsible authority, and adequate supervision and monitoring should be in place to make sure that the procedures specified in the permit are being followed. Under no circumstances should a person issue a permit to themselves.

### Know the types of permit

- **Hot work permit** – for work involving potential sources of ignition, risk of fire or explosion, emission of toxic fumes from the application of heat, welding or flame cutting, use of tools which may produce sparks, such as grinders, etc.
- **Electrical work permit** – primarily a statement that a circuit or item of electrical equipment is safe to work on.
- **Equipment disjuncting certificate/breaking containment permit** – for operations involving disconnecting equipment or pipe-work that contains (or has contained) hazardous or high-pressure substances.
- **Confined spaces entry certificate** – used to specify precautions for eliminating exposure to dangerous fumes or to an oxygen-depleted atmosphere before a person is allowed to enter a confined space.
- **Machinery certificate** – used for work on large, complex items of machinery to ensure correct isolation before the work is carried out.
- **Isolation certificate** – used as a means of ensuring that particular equipment is mechanically and electrically isolated.
- **Excavation permit/heavy equipment movement certificate** – required whenever any digging, excavation or boring has to be done, to ensure that no underground services or pipe work will be affected.
- **Radiation certificate** – outlines necessary control measures to minimise risks of exposure to radioactive sources, including site inspection, controls on source exposure, access or containment barriers and radiation monitoring.
- **Diving certificate** – to control diving activities and to ensure that no other activities taking place nearby can create unnecessary additional risks.

### Did you know?

#### Fact 1

Failures of permit to work systems are often attributable to a lack of training, instruction, communication or understanding of either the purpose or practical application of the system.

#### Fact 2

The issue of a permit does not, by itself, make a job safe – that can only be achieved by those preparing for the work, those supervising the work and those carrying it out.



# Permit to Work Systems

## Know the roles

A number of roles are commonly found in the day-to-day running of permit to work systems:

- **Originator** – person requesting the work.
- **Permit user** – person working under the terms of the permit.
- **Permit authoriser** – person authorising the permit for issue.
- **Issuing authority** – person issuing the permit (the authoriser and the issuing authority are often the same).
- **Performing authority** – person accepting the permit on behalf of the user(s).
- **Area authority** – person in control of the location where the work is to be carried out.
- **Site checker** – person carrying out checks as detailed on the permit.
- **Isolating authority** – person responsible for making isolations.

## Know the responsibility

Everyone who carries out work of any kind under a permit to work system (eg contractors, subcontractors, etc) has responsibilities and duties and it is important that each person is adequately trained and knows exactly what those responsibilities and duties are if they are to be carried out properly.

All individuals should ensure that:

- They are able to demonstrate a good understanding of the permit to work systems that are in operation.
- They do not start work on any job requiring a permit until one has been authorised and issued, its content understood and any necessary precautions have been taken.
- The conditions and precautions specified in the permits issued to them, or for work in which they will be involved, are fully implemented and will continue to be effective throughout the duration of work.
- All the precautions and safety measures that the permits and instructions state they should take are strictly followed.
- If in any doubt, or if any circumstances or conditions change, they stop work, make the work area safe and get advice immediately.

**“Under no circumstances should  
a person issue a permit to  
themselves”**

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