



WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE CHANGING

What Construction Businesses Need to Know

New limits take effect from 1 December 2026

Australia is transitioning from Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) to Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL). For some airborne contaminants, the limits are also changing significantly.

Construction workplaces can involve exposure from cutting, grinding, demolition, diesel plant, welding, coatings, solvents and other site activities. Now is the time to identify which changes are relevant to your projects and whether existing exposure monitoring and controls remain appropriate.

What should construction businesses do now?

- **IDENTIFY** THE AIRBORNE CONTAMINANTS GENERATED ACROSS PROJECTS, PLANT AND SITE ACTIVITIES.
- **CHECK** WHICH SUBSTANCES HAVE NEW OR CHANGED WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS.
- **ASSESS** WHETHER EXISTING EXPOSURE MONITORING REMAINS REPRESENTATIVE AND SUFFICIENT.
- **CONTROL** EXPOSURE THROUGH ELIMINATION, ISOLATION, VENTILATION, WET METHODS, WORK PRACTICES AND PPE.
- **PREPARE** BEFORE 1 DECEMBER RATHER THAN WAITING FOR THE NEW LIMITS TO TAKE EFFECT.

How JTA can help?



Do you know which WEL changes affect your workplace?

SOME EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE REDUCING SIGNIFICANTLY

EXAMPLE CONTAMINANT	CURRENT WES	NEW WEL	CHANGE
Diesel particulate matter	No national WES	0.01 mg/m ³ as respirable elemental carbon	New limit
Manganese*** - dust & compounds	1 mg/m ³	0.1 mg/m ³ inhalable / 0.02 mg/m ³	Up to 98% ↓
Toluene	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓
Styrene monomer	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓

These are examples only. The changes relevant to each construction business depend on the materials, plant, chemicals and activities present across its projects. ***New manganese WELs: 0.1 mg/m³ inhalable and 0.02 mg/m³ respirable.

Common airborne exposures in construction

EXPOSURE	WHERE IT MAY OCCUR
Silica dust	Cutting, grinding, drilling and demolition of silica-containing materials
Diesel exhaust	Excavators, loaders, generators, trucks and enclosed or poorly ventilated areas
Welding fumes	Structural steel, fabrication, repairs and hot work
Metal dusts	Grinding, cutting, sanding and fabrication
Solvents & VOCs	Painting, coatings, adhesives, sealants and cleaning products
Other dusts	Demolition, excavation, concrete works and material handling

Important: not every exposure listed above has a changing limit. For example, the respirable crystalline silica exposure limit is not changing on 1 December 2026, but silica remains a significant construction exposure that must continue to be managed.

IDENTIFY CONTAMINANTS



ASSESS EXPOSURE



AIR MONITORING



COMPARE LIMITS



RECOMMEND CONTROLS

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