WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE CHANGING

What Construction Businesses Need to Know

Most new limits start on 1 December 2026

Australia is transitioning from Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) to Workplace Exposure Limits (WEL), and some limits are falling sharply.

Start dates vary by state. Victoria and Queensland have delayed 15 substances, including Portland cement, softwood dust, bitumen fumes and manganese, to 1 December 2029. NSW applies them from 1 December 2026. Diesel has interim limits in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Check which dates apply at each of your projects.

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** NOW, 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/m³ as respirable elemental carbon	New limit
Manganese*** – dust & compounds †	1 mg/m³	0.1 mg/m³ inhalable / 0.02 mg/m³	Up to 98% ↓
Toluene	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓
Styrene monomer †	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓

These are examples only. † Later in some states. Diesel: 0.05 mg/m³ in NSW to June 2028, 0.1 mg/m³ in Vic & Qld to Dec 2029, WA undecided. Manganese, styrene: Vic & Qld from Dec 2029. ***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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