WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS ARE CHANGING

What Food Manufacturers 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 many limits are falling sharply.

Start dates vary by state. Victoria and Queensland have delayed 15 substances, including flour dust, grain dust and manganese, to 1 December 2029. SA has delayed flour and grain dust to July 2028 at the earliest. NSW applies them from 1 December 2026. Check which dates apply at each of your sites.

What should food manufacturers do now?

- **IDENTIFY** THE DUSTS, FUMES, GASES AND VAPOURS GENERATED OR USED ACROSS YOUR OPERATIONS.
- **CHECK** WHICH SUBSTANCES HAVE NEW OR CHANGED WORKPLACE EXPOSURE LIMITS.
- **ASSESS** WHETHER EXISTING EXPOSURE MONITORING REMAINS REPRESENTATIVE AND SUFFICIENT.
- **CONTROL** EXPOSURE THROUGH APPROPRIATE VENTILATION/LEV, ISOLATION, 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
Flour (cereal) dust †	No flour-specific	0.5 mg/m³	NEW LIMIT
Grain dust †	4 mg/m³	1.5 mg/m³	62.5% ↓
Manganese*** †	1 mg/m³	0.1 mg/m³ inhalable / 0.02 mg/m³	NEW LIMITS
Toluene	50 ppm	20 ppm	60% ↓

These are examples only. † Victoria & Queensland: from 1 December 2029. SA: flour and grain dust from July 2028 at the earliest. ***New manganese WELs: 0.1 mg/m³ inhalable and 0.02 mg/m³ respirable.

Common airborne exposures in food manufacturing

EXPOSURE	WHERE IT MAY OCCUR
Flour & ingredient dust	Weighing, tipping, mixing, milling and ingredient handling
Grain dust	Grain receiving, transfer, milling, storage and processing
Cleaning chemicals	Sanitation, washdown, chemical mixing and handling
Ammonia	Refrigeration systems, plant rooms and maintenance
Carbon dioxide	Refrigeration, carbonation and fermentation
Diesel exhaust	Loading areas, yards, warehouses and mobile plant
Welding fumes	Maintenance, fabrication and engineering activities

Important: not every exposure listed above has a changing limit. The substances relevant to your workplace depend on the specific activities undertaken at your sites.

IDENTIFY CONTAMINANTS » ASSESS EXPOSURE » AIR MONITORING » COMPARE LIMITS » RECOMMEND CONTROLS

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1300 856 282

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