

# Construction sector

Our priority plan for the construction sector covers the residential, civil, and commercial sub-sectors, specialist trades, and the full construction life cycle including excavation, building, maintenance, and demolition. We expect to allocate around a third of our targeted frontline activity to construction because of the high rates of acute harm, the large number of workers exposed to serious health risks, and the presence of high-risk work that must meet permitting requirements.

Construction has among the highest rates of acute and chronic harm. It accounts for around 15% of work-related fatalities and serious injuries, and it has the largest number of kaimahi with exposure to toxic dusts and fumes. Falls from height are a persistent cause of harm in residential construction. Vehicles, moving machinery, heavy objects, and earthworks pose serious risks on civil and building construction sites. Across the sector, there are risks of chronic harm from exposure to silica, asbestos, wood dust, welding, and exhaust fumes. The variety of risks, constantly changing work environment, and multiple businesses working together, require good planning and communication to ensure healthy and safe construction sites.

WorkSafe will ensure that lead construction businesses understand their responsibilities for looking after health and safety, including for subcontractors and tradespeople. Our workplace assessments will look at how well serious risks are managed, including compliance with specific requirements for high-risk work such as scaffolding or asbestos removal. We will be clear about how we enforce if poor practice is identified.

By effectively targeting our assessments and enforcement to the most serious risk and harm, we will reinforce work that industry groups are doing to raise health and safety standards across the sector.

## WorkSafe's priorities

Priorities	Why	Objectives
<b>Reinforce sector-led priorities</b>	Being clear on our role in the system, and doing that well, will support the efforts of construction sector leads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- WorkSafe and sector partners have a shared understanding of the highest priority actions and who will lead</li> <li>- Improved trust and confidence in WorkSafe among our sector partners</li> </ul>
<b>Target the management of risk and overlapping duties on complex sites</b>	Targeting the actions only we can take will make effective use of our resources to influence better outcomes. Ensuring businesses meet their shared responsibilities is an area we have identified for improvement in construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Businesses make a change after interaction with WorkSafe</li> <li>- Investigations and prosecutions are targeted to maximise their deterrent effect</li> </ul>
<b>Encourage large, influential businesses to lead improved health and safety practice</b>	Large, well-resourced construction companies can influence the health and safety culture and practice of smaller, less well-resourced construction companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large companies show commitment to ensuring healthy and safe work in their areas of influence</li> <li>- Improved risk identification and management by all business types</li> </ul>

## Top harms

- A worker falls from height
- A worker is hit by a falling object
- A worker is hit by a vehicle or other moving object
- A worker is exposed to substances hazardous to health including silica dust, welding fumes, wood dust, and asbestos

## Key risk factors

- Insufficient or unclear accountability for health and safety through the contracting chain
- Poor risk identification and management practices
- Poor management of overlapping duties on complex sites
- Insufficient frontline leadership capability
- Inadequate training and supervision of inexperienced kaimahi

## Partner concerns

- Insights and information about what WorkSafe is seeing
- Hazard identification and safety culture
- Hazardous exposures
- Leadership at supervisor level
- Adequacy of foundation training
- Kaimahi entering the workforce

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## What WorkSafe will do:

Priority	Initiative	Initiative description
<b>Reinforce sector-led priorities</b>	Share WorkSafe data and insights with key construction sector partners	Share WorkSafe data and insights, including fatalities, notifications patterns, and what our inspectorate sees, with construction sector lead organisations so that they can influence change through their channels.
	Give certainty to the sector through a clear and credible enforcement position	Clarify our enforcement position for the construction sector, clearly communicate our expectations, and follow through with action consistent with our position.
<b>Target the management of risk and overlapping duties on complex sites</b>	Target serious risks and management of overlapping duties in residential construction projects	Undertake workplace assessment targeting management of overlapping duties on higher risk residential construction sites where multiple businesses work together. Prioritise assessments and notifications related to working at height, working around vehicles, exposure to toxic dusts and fumes, and compliance with permitting requirements such as asbestos removal, scaffolding and crane operation. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
	Target serious risks on large complex sites (commercial and civil)	Undertake workplace assessments targeting complex construction sites likely to have subcontracting arrangements, multiple businesses working together, and vulnerable workers including migrant workers and workers on labour hire. Prioritise assessments and notifications related to working at height, working around vehicles, exposure to toxic dusts and fumes, and compliance with permitting requirements such as asbestos removal, scaffolding and crane operation. Where we find poor practice, take action aligned to the sector enforcement position.
<b>Encourage large, influential businesses to lead improved health and safety practice.</b>	Communicate our expectations and enforcement position to the biggest and most influential construction companies	Directly engage with the largest construction companies, with extensive contracting chains, to inform them of our expectations, our key areas of focus, and our enforcement position.
	Build understanding of workers at greater risk	Increase our understanding of workers at greater risk of harm and explore how WorkSafe can influence the relevant risk factors.

## How we will track our progress

### During Year 1 we expect to see

- Agreed sector priorities for guidance and information sharing.
- Workplace assessments targeted to construction in line with our planned resource distribution, delivered in a nationally consistent way.
- Continued enforcement and investigations in accordance with our current policies and protocols.

### During Year 2 we expect to see

- Two-way information sharing between WorkSafe and construction sector partners.
- Clearly communicated expectations for construction businesses, including for overlapping duties and through the contracting chain.
- Consistent focus on key risk factors in our workplace assessments, enforcement, and investigations.
- Exploration of opportunities for equity-focused programmes in construction.