

### Information Sheet: Safe Operating Procedures

#### Purpose

The purpose of this information sheet is to provide guidance to staff in deciding if a safe operating procedure is required in accordance with the Health Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) [Hazard Management Procedure](#).

#### Q1 What is a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) and what information is included?

A SOP is a documented step-by-step process required to carry out a task safely. It should be written with sufficient detail to ensure that someone can complete the activities in a safe manner.

**Note:** some tasks may require a proficiency be demonstrated by the operator before it is performed unsupervised. Refer to Q7 for further information.

The SOP is an effective safety measure:

- when the operator needs to follow specific steps from beginning to end, in a defined order, to complete the task safely
- when the task is completed in the same way every time.

The SOP should include the following information:

- the name of the task
- the name(s) of the people involved in drafting the SOP
- the hazards the operator needs to be aware of
- the task-related reference documents
- photograph(s) where necessary
- the name of the corresponding risk assessment(s)
- the operational steps from start to finish, including any pre-operational checks and things to be done when the task is complete (e.g. waste management)
- any personal protective equipment (PPE) required to complete the task
- any emergency procedures
- a version number.

The Safe Operating Procedure template is available in the [Hazard Management Procedure](#) (Appendix C).

#### Q2 Do all tasks require a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP)?

No. An SOP is only required when the person completing a risk assessment has identified that a task has the potential to cause a serious injury/illness, and an SOP would assist the operator to complete the task safely. A SOP describes the required process and use of control measures and should be written prior to commencing a task.

#### Q3 Do I need to complete a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) for the item of equipment/chemical or is it just completed for the activity?

The SOP is written for a task or activity which may include the operation of multiple items of equipment and/or chemicals in order to complete the task. Inclusion of safe operating requirements for these items may be required in the appropriate step in the SOP. Refer to the safety instructions contained in the operators manual for the item of equipment and the safety data sheet for the use of the chemical. This will assist to identify the safety aspects requiring inclusion in the SOP.

#### Q4 What factors should I consider in deciding if a Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) is required?

Refer to the Hazard Management webpage, [Safe Operating Procedure \(SOP\) decision tool](#).

#### Q5 Who should complete the Safe Operating Procedure (SOP)?

The SOP should be completed by the supervisor or person in control of the area and/or any other workers who are proficient in the activity (i.e. that have a good working knowledge of the process and task.)

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**Q6 How would I find out if there is an existing Safe Operating Procedure (SOP) for an activity?**

You can find information about an established SOP in the following ways:

- During your induction, your supervisor, or the person in control of the area, will inform you about the potential hazards of the assigned tasks and the recommended safe procedures to follow before starting the activity.
- The SOP may be displayed in your area of work, such as near the equipment you are about to use.
- You may inquire, whether an SOP has been created, from your supervisor or the person in charge of the area.

**Q7 What level of information and/or instruction is required for an activity with a documented Safe Operating Procedure (SOP)?**

The level of information and instruction required for a task with a documented SOP depends on the level of risk associated with the activity.

- For low-risk tasks that do not require a particular level of proficiency, the information provided in the SOP may be given during the worker's induction or as general information.
- For high-risk tasks, workers would need to receive a more comprehensive level of instruction and demonstrate proficiency before completing the task without supervision. The SOP can be used as a tool to assess proficiency during the training process.

**Proficiency** (in the University context) refers to the demonstrable knowledge, ability or skill acquired through instruction, enabling the worker to complete an inherently high risk / high risk activity safely and without supervision. Proficiency training typically involves a practical component, allowing the trainee to observe and demonstrate their skills to their trainer/assessor. This type of training is mandatory before workers undertake activities where proficiency training has been identified as a control measure in the risk assessment. Proficiency training may be based on the SOP, or through a logbook, or series of supervised training sessions/courses.

For further information on proficiencies and requirements, refer to the [Provision of Information, Instruction and Training Procedure](#).

**Q8 Where do I go for further information on Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) and/or the SOP template?**

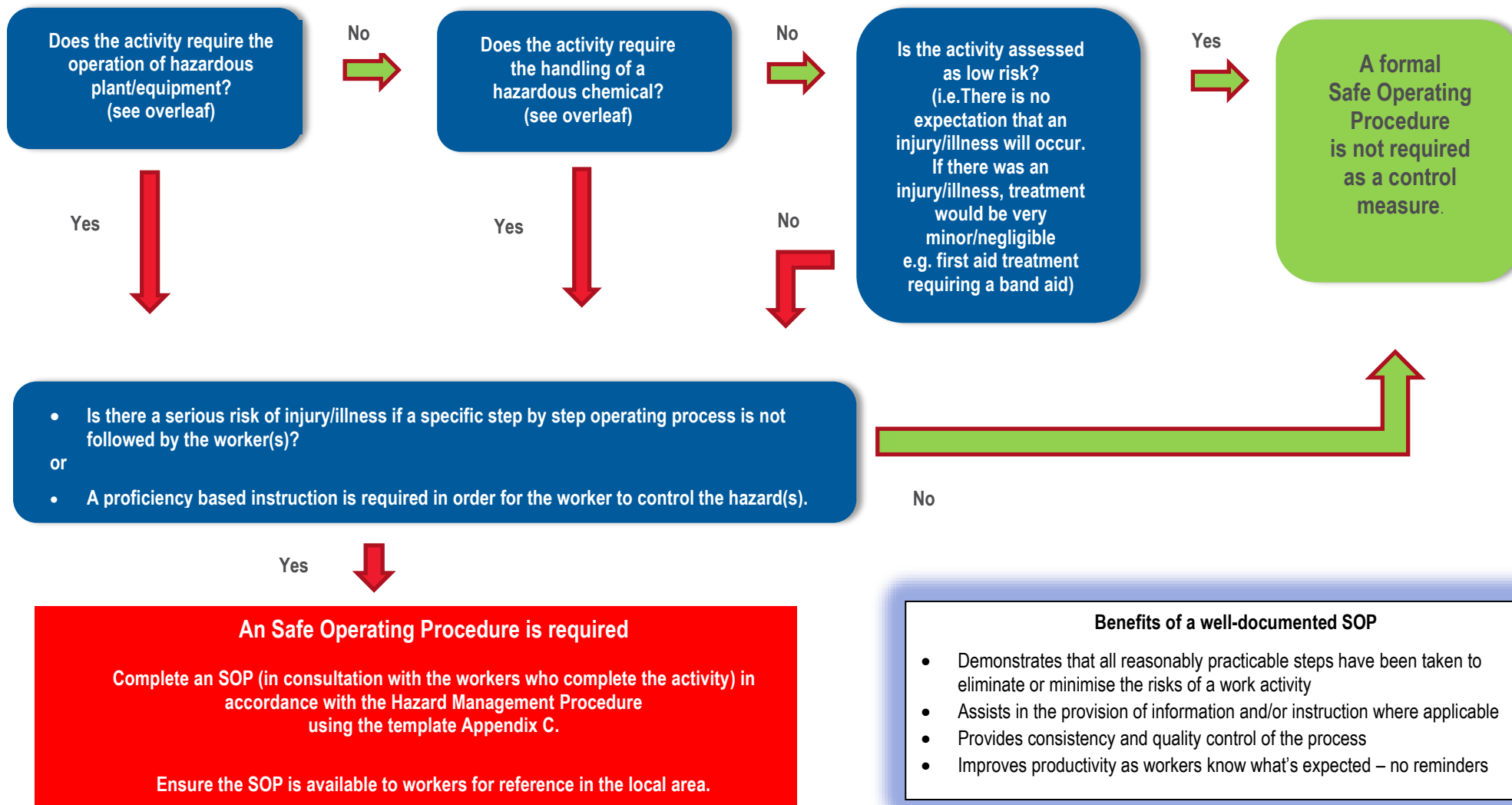
The SOP template can be found on the [Hazard Management website](#) (under tools, forms and templates).

For more information on SOPs refer to the [Hazard Management Procedure](#) or contact [the HSW Team](#).

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## HAZARD MANAGEMENT – SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP) DECISION TOOL

Supervisors or person in control of the activity/area:



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Hazardous chemical	Hazardous plant/equipment
<p>A substance, mixture or article that satisfies the criteria for a hazard class in the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), including a classification referred to in Schedule 6 <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)</a>, but does not include a substance, mixture or article that satisfies the criteria solely for one of the following hazard classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) acute toxicity – oral – cat 5</li> <li>(b) acute toxicity – dermal – cat 5</li> <li>(c) acute toxicity – inhalation – cat 5</li> <li>(d) skin corrosion/irritation – cat 3</li> <li>(e) serious eye damage/irritation</li> <li>(f) aspiration hazard – cat 2</li> <li>(g) flammable gas – cat 2</li> <li>(h) acute hazard to the aquatic environment</li> <li>(i) chronic hazard to the aquatic environment – cat 1 – 4</li> <li>(j) hazardous to the ozone layer.</li> </ul>	<p>Any plant/equipment used for a work/task related activity that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has the potential:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to entangle, crush, cut/stab/puncture, trap, shear, tear or strike (i.e. safeguarding is required)</li> <li>• for a pinch point to trap any part of the body or catch loose clothing, hair etc (e.g. conveyor, gears, loaders and other moving equipment)</li> <li>• for a worker to come into contact with fluids under high pressure</li> <li>• to cause a serious burn/injury</li> <li>• to expose the worker to live electrical conductors</li> <li>• to expose the worker to gases/vapours/liquids/dusts/other substances triggered by the operation</li> <li>• to explode or implode</li> <li>• to exceed safe noise levels</li> <li>• for the worker to adopt poor posture (see definition for a Hazardous manual activity)</li> <li>• to overturn, collide with another person or thing (e.g. moving powered plant).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• lifts or suspends a load</li> <li>• is an industrial robot or other remotely or automatically energised plant at the workplace</li> <li>• involves non-ionising radiation or high level magnetic fields</li> <li>• requires registration in accordance with Schedule 5 of the <a href="#">Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Refer to the <a href="#">Plant/Equipment Safety Management Procedure</a> for additional information.</p>

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