Email

The word email is a contraction of the two words 'electronic mail' and is a modern means of communication that has expanded rapidly all over the world since the early 1990s. Email is now used widely in the construction industry. An email message is a type of memo that is composed within a form that is available in a number of computer programs. The memo is then transmitted directly from the writer's computer to another computer over a local area network or may be transmitted to anywhere in the world over the Internet.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Email

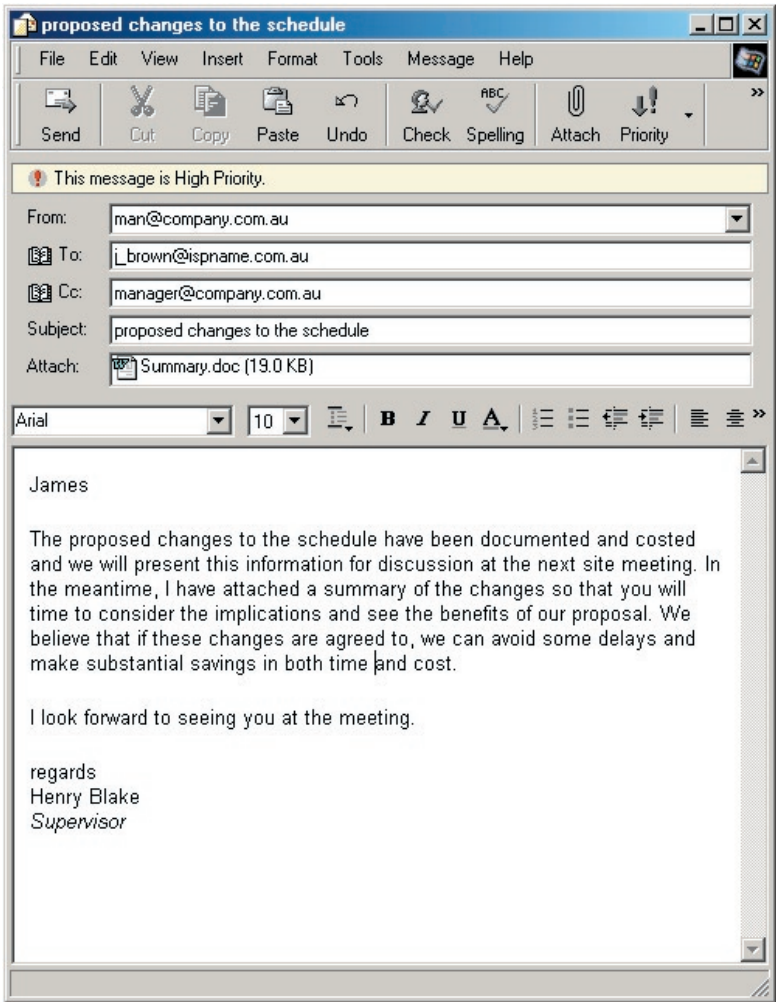
The use of email messaging can provide an alternative to letters, memos, telephone calls, faxes and personal meetings. Emails provide an informal means of communication that is quick and easy to use. The table below outlines some of the advantages and disadvantages of emails against more traditional methods of sending messages.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Emails are quick and easy to write • Cheap and easy to send – no paper, envelopes or stamps • Fast delivery – almost instant anywhere in the world • Can be easily saved, stored and retrieved • Message can be easily copied to multiple receivers • Can be used within or between organisations • Email receiver can reply instantly, store email on computer or print it out • Messages can be sent or received outside of normal business hours or from remote locations	• Message cannot be verified by handwritten signature • Not suitable for many formal or official messages • Of no use if receiver does not check email inbox or have computer access • In most cases, is not a secure method of sending confidential or sensitive information • Email system open to abuse if users flood the system with useless data • Messages can be used to deliver a virus to receiver's computer • Some people are not familiar with this use of technology • Open to misuse or personal usage

Creating an Email Message

The format of an email message may vary slightly depending on the program used but the main all features of the programs are similar. As a typical example, the steps involved in sending an email using Microsoft Outlook Express© are as follows:

- Open the email program and select 'Create Mail' from the toolbar.
- Fill in the address of the person that you are sending the email to in the 'To:' area. If you wish to send the message to more than one person, separate each address with a comma or a semicolon (;). The address must be in the correct format, for example, — j_brown@ispname.com.au



Typical Email

If you have previously sent or received an email from this address, it may be selected from the Address Book which is the icon showing an open book to the left of the word 'To'.

- To send the message to others, add their addresses into the box marked 'Cc' or click on the Address Book and select the names. All of these names and addresses will be visible to other receivers.
- Copies of the email can be sent to others using the 'Bcc' box and in this case, only the receiver and the sender can see to whom the message was sent to. The description 'Bcc' may be interpreted as 'blind copies'.

- In the 'Subject' box type in a short descriptive message title.
- Type your message, and then click 'Send' to forward the email.

If you want to send more detailed information such as a letter or a report then this can be sent with the email as an attachment. To send an attachment with an email message, click on the attachment icon (a paperclip) on the toolbar. This will bring up a box called 'Insert Attachment' and you will have to type in or locate the name of the file that you wish to attach, enter it and then click on the 'Attach' button.

Email messages can be marked with a priority symbol. Using the 'Priority' icon on the toolbar, select High, Normal or Low Priority and click on it to set the rating.

The E-Mail Difference

E-mail is different from other forms of communication; in particular:

- it is more conversational than letters or memos
- the sender can obtain instant feedback from the receiver
- it is less effective in conveying the emotional context of a message than either face-to-face or telephone communication
- what the sender sees may not be the same as what the receiver gets, depending on whether the receiver's e-mail software is the same as the sender's.

For these and other reasons, the use of e-mail as if it was a letter, memo or fax is not recommended. Instead, it is worthwhile to learn some of the habits and customs that have developed as more and more people around the world use e-mail.

Using Email Effectively

Numerous manuals and texts about 'how to use e-mail' are now available. Many of these contain valuable suggestions. A number of recommended, e-mail focused websites are shown in the List of Websites at the conclusion of this Topic. These, in turn, lead to lists of books and more websites about e-mail.

However, anything about sending and receiving e-mail that looks like a rule or code of practice is not 'Set in Stone'. Customs for using e-mail are still developing, and the only statement that can be made for certain is that they will change over time. It is advisable to consult some of the reference sources (such as the listed websites), but the only sure way to learn good e-mail usage is to actually use it. It is a case of 'the more you practice, the more you will learn'.

The following paragraphs give a few suggestions for effective use of e-mail. However, these are suggestions only. Nothing substitutes for experience. In addition, what is '*cool*' today may well be '*daggy*' tomorrow.

Context

Paper-based communication usually gives the receiver some indication of the context of the message. For example, a letterhead provides the context for a business letter and a birthday greeting is written on a birthday card. However, an e-mail message includes no clear indicators of context. It is therefore a good idea to give the receiver some clues. For example:

If you started and ended a message with the following, the receiver would clearly understand that it was a business message:

(Start) Re: Second Excavator for Redlands Job

(End) John McNamara

Manager Earthmoving Plant

PlantHire Pty Ltd

Phone 07 3456 7890

Fax 07 3456 6789

email: jmacnam@planthire.com.au

However, if you started and ended with the following, the receiver would clearly understand that it was an informal message:

(Start) Hey IncredibleHulk

(End) Teaser

Of the two forms of ending shown above, the first would be inappropriate if you were simply inviting someone to lunch. The second would be appropriate if you knew the person well and the setting for the exchange of e-mails was informal.

Subject Line

The subject line is more important in an e-mail than in other written communication. If you write an informative subject line, the receiver can immediately understand what the message is about and whether it is important or not. For example, if you are trying to tell the job manager that you need 500 cubic metres of 20 mm Mary River gravel by next Tuesday, the subject line might be:

Need 500/20mm MR gravel by Tues

This will make sure that the receiver can understand what you need from the subject line alone, even if the remainder of the message does not get through. The receiver can then reply to confirm your request or seek more information from you.

However, you can make the message more useful for the receiver by adding a few more pieces of information. For example, a subject line stating:

URGENT: Need 500/20mm MR gravel by Tues

would straight away indicate to the receiver that this is an urgent request. A subject line stating:

REQ: 500/20mm MR gravel by Tues

tells the receiver that this is a routine request (as opposed to a FYI, for your information, or URGENT).

Emphasis

It is pointless to use bold or italics as a means of emphasizing a point in an e-mail. Either of these may not come across on your receiver's software, or may show up as annoying formatting symbols.

Instead, you can add emphasis in a variety of other ways:

The grader was Out Of Action being serviced all last week

— Initial Capitals indicate light emphasis

The grader was *out of action* being serviced all last week

— asterisks around words have the same effect

!!!DON'T START!!! the final trim yet, wait till I've had a look at the problem with the grader blade.

— CAPITALS and exclamation marks add emphasis where it is needed

However, constructing a message entirely of capitals is rarely a good idea, as it is tedious to read and may give the wrong impression.

Remember!
Using ALL CAPITALS in an e-mail message is the equivalent of shouting.

For example, the following would be completely inappropriate if you were sending your boss a routine report:

THE GRADER WAS OUT OF ACTION BEING SERVICED ALL LAST WEEK.

The important point is not to use all capitals in the whole or part of an e-mail message unless there are strong reasons for doing so.

Attachments

It is often useful to attach a document that you have referred to in an e-mail, so that the receiver can also refer to it. However, it is pointless to send large documents by e-mail, as they will probably not get through. Ten megabytes (10Mb) is about the limit for many office e-mail systems.

Keeping It Short and Sweet

Your receiver will have to use the scroll bars if the message is too long. This is not a big issue if he or she gets only a few e-mails, but could be an annoyance and give the person a poor impression if he or she is dealing with dozens of e-mails a day. In addition, because of the formatting limitations of many e-mail programs, it is better to adopt the following guidelines:

- Keep messages short; less than 25 lines per message is recommended.
- Keep paragraphs to a few sentences each.
- Keep lines to less than 70 characters.

Another way to reduce the length of e-mails is to use 'two-cent' words in preference to 'two-dollar' words, as described earlier in this section.

Misspellings

Misspellings or typos may or may not be an issue for your receiver. It all depends on the context of the message. For example, a message beginning with:

Confriming our meeting for 10:00 am. on Wednesday

would look unprofessional in a business e-mail to an important client

However, most people in business routinely accept a few minor misspellings in a message, as they realise that you are just as busy as they are.

In general, the more informal the context of the message is, the more that people will tend to tolerate misspellings.

E-Mail Names

It is worth taking a few minutes to think through the e-mail name you will use (that is, if the system you use gives you a choice). The name immediately conveys a lot about the context in which you expect to deal, and will certainly give the receiver a few clues about the kind of person you are or your status in the organisation. For example:

Barbara.J.Thompson@roadcontractors.com.au

would indicate that the person is most likely to be dealing in a business context.

Chris.Williams@hotmail.com

is the kind of name a person would use when known to most of his or her receivers (i.e. the context makes the difference between Christopher, Christine or Christiana immaterial).

RadSkater@bigpond.com

— is for the person who wants to be known to most of his or her receivers as a teenager (or is a teenager).

Formality and Informality

By its nature, e-mail is a more conversational than other forms of written communication, such as letters or memos. The formal style of writing therefore tends to get different results to the informal. It is worth remembering that:

- the best guide to the degree of informality you use is the local custom of your receivers (e.g. do they accept informal use of names as the norm?)
- an informal tone encourages a response (e.g. if you are trying to encourage input to a proposal, informal may be appropriate; if you don't want to be flooded with responses, use a slightly more formal tone).

Smileys

There are now whole dictionaries devoted to the meaning of smileys, or facial expressions formed by using standard keyboard characters. Smileys commonly used in e-mails include:

:-) happy

:-(sad

:-o astonished

>:-< angry

;-) wink

The general rule with smileys is: if it's appropriate in the context, use them.

Acronyms and Jargon

Commonly used acronyms include:

BTW	by the way
FYI	for your information
IMHO	in my humble/honest opinion
LOL	laughing out loud
ROTFL	(I am) rolling on the floor laughing (at what you just said)
TIA	thanks in advance {also written advTHANKSance}
NRN	no response needed

E-mail has a jargon all its own. The only way to learn the jargon is to use the medium and get to know the terms by practical example. A few examples follow.

Spam	Unsolicited e-mail sent to many people simultaneously; usually commercial, but may be damaging (e.g. viruses) or annoying (e.g. chain letters).
Bounce	A message that was returned to the sender, either because the mail address was incorrect, or there was a configuration problem at the receiver's end.
Mailbot	A piece of software that automatically replies to e-mail.

As with smileys, acronyms and jargon may be used if appropriate in the context.

In addition, people often transmit smileys and acronyms as SMS messages on mobile phones.

Domain Names

The domain name is the part that comes after the @ sign in the e-mail address, such as:

aol.com

abc.net.au

The word at the left is the name of the computer that actually handles the e-mail. For example, "aol" is Australia On-Line" and 'abc' is Australian Broadcasting Commission.

It is very important to get the domain name right when sending e-mails. For example, the following e-mails will most likely reach two different people in different departments of the same organisation:

pat@uno.bogusname.com

pat@dos.bogusname.com

The following are examples of commonly used parts of domain names:

.com Commercial business, company (US and Australia)

.co Commercial business, company (NZ and United Kingdom)

.net Network provider, internet service provider

.edu Educational institution (university, TAFE or school)

.org Not-for-profit organisation

.gov Government department (US and Australia)

.govt Government department (NZ and United Kingdom)

Reports

A business report is a means of recording factual information, opinions and recommendations in a standard format so that the data can be analysed, discussed, distributed, stored, and acted upon. A standard format is used so that the data can be recorded and presented in a logical and consistent manner. The purpose of a business report is to achieve some purpose or goal and so it is important that the data is presented in a way that is readily accessible and understandable.

Many companies have adopted a standard format or style of report and if you are required to submit a report, you should firstly find out what is expected and follow the example of some typical reports that are similar in nature to the report that you are required to submit.

Case Study no. 4 gives an example of a standard format.

The following standard report styles are described in detail to give you a basic understanding of the requirements of a business report and may be used as a guide where a specific company format is not available.

There are many different ways of setting out a report depending on factors such as:

- Length of the report
- Type of report
- Type of information
- Type of delivery

Length of the Report

A short report may use a simple and efficient format to record data whereas a long report might use a much more complex layout with a numbering system to detail comprehensive information. Both types of report will follow a similar set of steps to present a logical development of the report.

A basic, short report may use the following simple format, including the sections.

- Title page
- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

Longer, more comprehensive reports may include additional sections such as a table of contents, synopsis, bibliography and appendix.

Type of Report

Three typical types of reports are:

- Investigative report
- Progress report
- Periodic report

Investigative Report

This type of report is most commonly used to investigate the need for some action. The action may be required, for instance, to fix a problem, initiate changes to improve efficiency or to expand business activities. For example, an investigative report may be written to analyse the reasons for frequent machinery breakdowns and make recommendations to improve the situation.

Progress Report

A progress report may be prepared on request or on a regular basis to communicate progress on work being done to people within, or external to, the company. For example, a report may be prepared regularly on a fortnightly basis to inform senior management and clients of progress being made on a project. The report may include details of current job status and may record details of problems, action taken, and recommendations for future action.

Periodic Report

Periodic reports are prepared to provide information on some aspect of a business's activities to various levels of the business. For example, a monthly report on costs and expenditure may be prepared on a regular basis and circulated to senior management and supervisors so that they can manage their financial responsibilities better. Information in this type of report is often displayed in graph or chart format so that it can be compared to information from the previous period or budget targets.

Type of Information

Some reports contain a lot of complex technical or factual information while others may be used to record opinions and predictions. Many reports use facts and analysis to support a case leading to recommendations for action.

Reports containing a lot of pictorial information in the form of graphs, pictures or even videos or sound recordings may be presented in a different format to reports that mainly use written words.

Type of Delivery

Reports will differ in the way that they are presented and delivered. Some reports may be delivered orally, for example, at a meeting or conference and others in written format. Most written reports are copied and distributed throughout the organisation. Reports may also be presented using technology such as PowerPoint presentations and using sound or video recordings.

Filling in Forms

Supervisors will often be expected to fill in forms and may on occasion be required to design forms to gather information. These types of documents are called pro forma sheets and some examples of forms that may need to be completed at work are:

- Time sheet
- Gate pass
- Leave application
- Stationery request
- Work order.

When filling in forms such as these it is important that the information is complete and accurate and if it is handwritten, that it is legible. As with any form of communication in the workplace, errors can lead to delays, frustration and extra cost and so it is worth getting it right first time.

Supervisors may sometimes need to create forms to gather and record information. In this case, forms should be designed so that they satisfy the following criteria:

- The information gathered should be only what is required – extra information wastes time and effort.
- Form layout should be designed carefully so that adequate room is left for users to fill in the required information.
- Forms should be designed in a logical order — make them user-friendly and easy to read.

Remember!

When designing a new form, think about forms you have used in the past and what made them easy or hard to use. Wherever possible, set up forms so that they are as easy to use as possible.

Types of forms that road construction supervisors may be called on to complete include:

- time sheets
- foreman's daily report
- incident notification
- hazard report.

Time Sheets

Time sheets are one of the most important forms that an employee has to fill in on a regular basis. This is because time sheets provide information that is vital to managing a number of areas of business. These include:

- Employee pay – time sheets record information that the accounts department use to calculate pays
- Employee attendance – time sheets record when an employee attended work and for how many hours. This information also affects employee sick leave and holiday pay entitlements
- Job costs – time sheet data is used to calculate individual job costs and in turn overall project costs
- Job time allocation – employee time allocated to particular job numbers is used to analyse and plan the most efficient use of labour

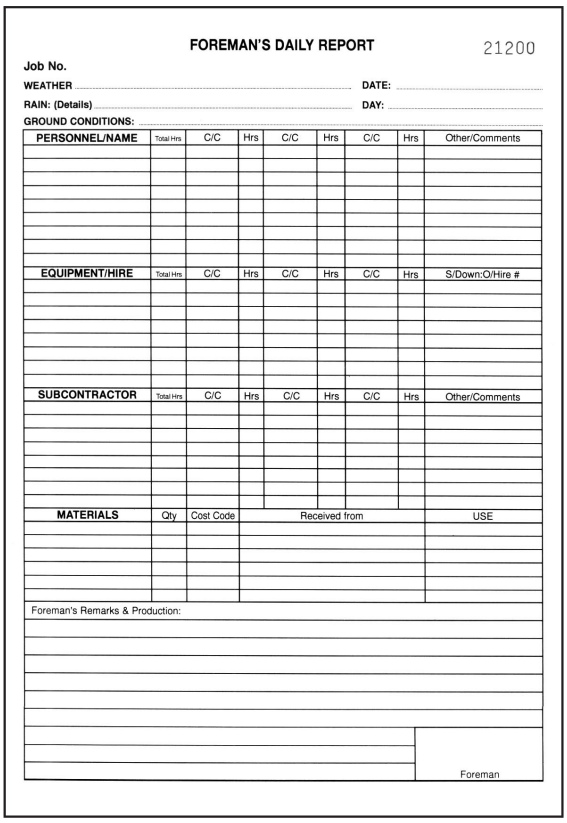
Supervisors should ensure that all time sheets (including his/her own) are filled in accurately and completely. The time and effort expended in chasing up missing information or correcting errors is costly to the organisation.

Foreman's Daily Report/Site Diary

Note!
Report formats vary from company to company. The examples used here are a guide only.

As a supervisor in the construction industry, you will receive and collect amounts of documentation— all of it relevant to the job in some way. One of the most important of these is the foreman's daily report. This document is usually designed so that it provides space for recording, on a particular day:

- the names of people employed on the job
- the work on which they were employed
- the cost centre to which their work is to be charged
- details of equipment used on the job
- details of subcontractors and the work they performed
- materials received and used on the job
- special conditions encountered or events that occurred.



FOREMAN'S DAILY REPORT 21200

Job No.
WEATHER ..... DATE: .....
RAIN: (Details) ..... DAY: .....
GROUND CONDITIONS: .....

PERSONNEL/NAME	Total Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	Other/Comments

EQUIPMENT/HIRE	Total Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	S/Down:O/Hire #

SUBCONTRACTOR	Total Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	C/C	Hrs	Other/Comments

MATERIALS	Qty	Cost Code	Received from	USE

Foreman's Remarks & Production:

Foreman

While this information has an immediate value as a record of work performed and time spent, it may also become important again at a future date. Case Study 2 provides an example.

Important!
The information in a site diary should match inspector's reports and contractor's reports as closely as possible. Differing content of reports can cause problems at a later date, especially if they are used as evidence in court.

Site Diary

The foreman's daily report shown above is one example of the type of form companies use to record daily events on site. The site diary is an important record that has legal implications. On most construction sites, both parties to a contract keep to assist them in meeting contract obligations and in recording significant events that occur on the worksite.

For instance, supervisors should record details of accidents or serious incidents, confrontations with contractors or members of the public, etc. These records or entries may be used in court or in any subsequent investigations into the event that has occurred.

In using a diary or log book to record details, there are a number of important considerations to remember. Entries should be:

- legible (able to be read easily)
- accurate (check that the information is correct)
- detailed (time, date, place, witnesses etc.)
- specific and relevant (to-the-point and meaningful)
- factual (avoid guesses, opinions etc.)
- timely (write entries promptly – not weeks later)
- not emotional (emotional entries may lack credibility).

Case Study No. 4 shows two daily reports produced by the same foreman at different times. One report includes only a few words under 'Remarks'. The other includes detailed comments about conditions on site and is therefore much more useful to the company's managers.

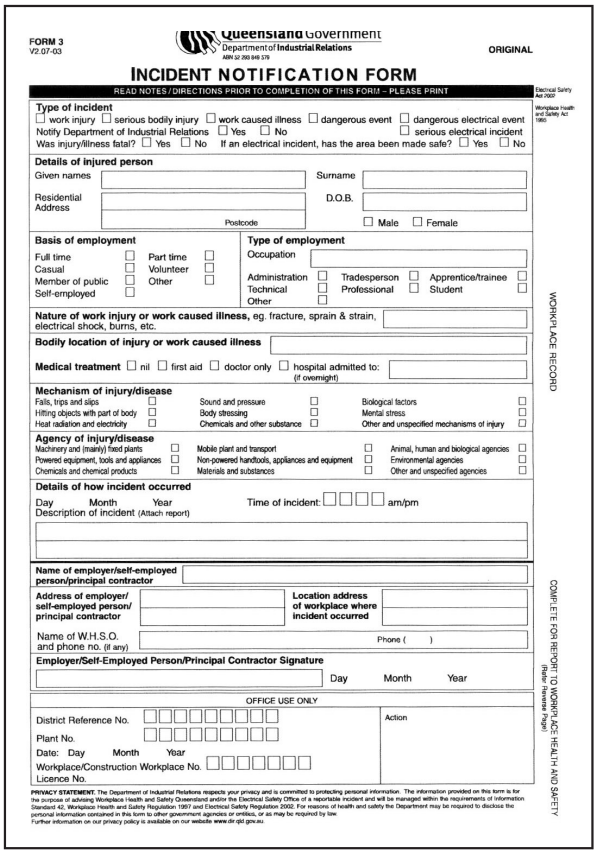
Site diaries are discussed in more detail in Topic 4 in this series, entitled Contract Administration.

Incident Notification (Form 3)

Whenever an incident that is notifiable in terms of the Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995, an incident report must be completed. These reports are completed:

- by the principal contractor on a construction workplace
- whenever a serious bodily injury, work-caused illness or dangerous event occurs in a workplace
- within 24 hours of the principal contractor's becoming aware of the incident.

The Workplace Health and Safety website www.whs.qld.gov.au gives instructions for completing the form and retaining copies, and lists the offices to which the completed form must be sent.



FORM 3
V2.07-03

Queensland Government
Department of Industrial Relations
ABN 32 280 849 578

ORIGINAL

INCIDENT NOTIFICATION FORM

READ NOTES / DIRECTIONS PRIOR TO COMPLETION OF THIS FORM – PLEASE PRINT

Electrical Safety Act 2002
Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995

Type of incident
☐ work injury ☐ serious bodily injury ☐ work caused illness ☐ dangerous event ☐ dangerous electrical event
Notify Department of Industrial Relations ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ serious electrical incident
Was injury/illness fatal? ☐ Yes ☐ No If an electrical incident, has the area been made safe? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Details of injured person
Given names | Surname
Residential Address | D.O.B.
Postcode | ☐ Male ☐ Female

Basis of employment
Full time ☐ Part time ☐
Casual ☐ Volunteer ☐
Member of public ☐ Other ☐
Self-employed ☐

Type of employment
Occupation
Administration ☐ Tradesperson ☐ Apprentice/trainee ☐
Technical ☐ Professional ☐ Student ☐
Other ☐

Nature of work injury or work caused illness, eg. fracture, sprain & strain, electrical shock, burns, etc.

Bodily location of injury or work caused illness

Medical treatment ☐ nil ☐ first aid ☐ doctor only ☐ hospital admitted to: (if overnight)

Mechanism of injury/disease
Falls, trips and slips ☐ Sound and pressure ☐ Biological factors ☐
Hitting objects with part of body ☐ Body stressing ☐ Mental stress ☐
Heat radiation and electricity ☐ Chemicals and other substance ☐ Other and unspecified mechanisms of injury ☐

Agency of injury/disease
Machinery and (mainly) fixed plants ☐ Mobile plant and transport ☐ Animal, human and biological agencies ☐
Powered equipment, tools and appliances ☐ Non-powered handtools, appliances and equipment ☐ Environmental agencies ☐
Chemicals and chemical products ☐ Materials and substances ☐ Other and unspecified agencies ☐

Details of how incident occurred
Day Month Year Time of incident: ☐☐☐☐ am/pm
Description of incident (Attach report)

Name of employer/self-employed person/principal contractor

Address of employer/ self-employed person/ principal contractor | **Location address of workplace where incident occurred**

Name of W.H.S.O. and phone no. (if any) | Phone ( )

Employer/Self-Employed Person/Principal Contractor Signature
Day Month Year

OFFICE USE ONLY
District Reference No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Plant No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Date: Day Month Year
Workplace/Construction Licence No. Workplace No. ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
Action

PRIVACY STATEMENT. The Department of Industrial Relations respects your privacy and is committed to protecting personal information. The information provided on this form is for the purpose of advising Workplace Health and Safety Queensland and/or the Electrical Safety Office of a reportable incident and will be managed within the requirements of Information Standard 42, Workplace Health and Safety Regulation 1997 and Electrical Safety Regulation 2002. For reasons of health and safety the Department may be required to disclose the personal information contained in this form to other government agencies or entities, or as may be required by law.
Further information on our privacy policy is available on our website www.dir.qld.gov.au.

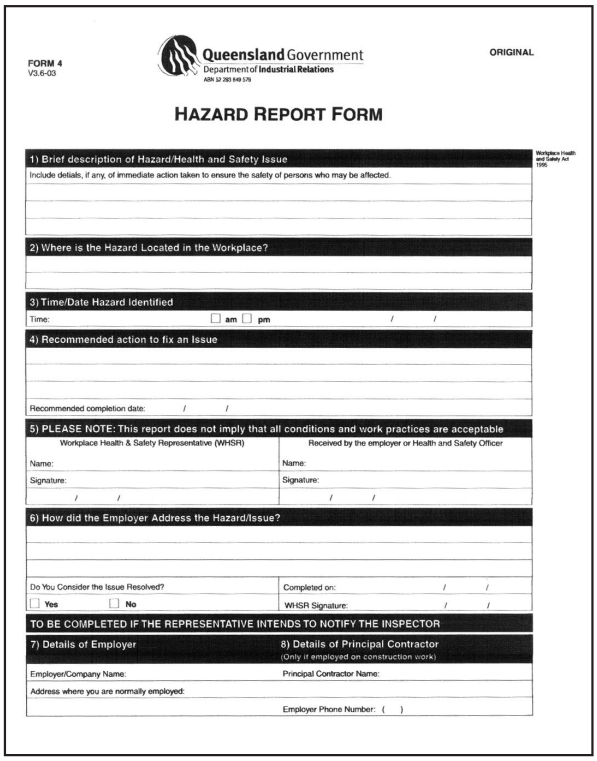
WORKPLACE RECORD

COMPLETE FOR REPORT TO WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY (Refer Reverse Page)

Hazard Report (Form 4)

A hazard report may be used to advise an employer or workplace health and safety officer of any hazardous condition, work practice or related issue at work. The aim of the report is to promote the resolution of workplace hazards by discussion between employers, workplace health and safety representatives and workers.

Instructions for completing the form and retaining copies are available from the Workplace Health and Safety website.



FORM 4
V3.6-03

Queensland Government
Department of Industrial Relations
ABN 32 280 849 578

ORIGINAL

HAZARD REPORT FORM

Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995

1) Brief description of Hazard/Health and Safety Issue
Include details, if any, of immediate action taken to ensure the safety of persons who may be affected.

2) Where is the Hazard Located in the Workplace?

3) Time/Date Hazard Identified
Time: ☐ am ☐ pm / /

4) Recommended action to fix an Issue
Recommended completion date: / /

5) PLEASE NOTE: This report does not imply that all conditions and work practices are acceptable

Workplace Health & Safety Representative (WHSR)	Received by the employer or Health and Safety Officer
Name:	Name:
Signature:	Signature:
/ /	/ /

6) How did the Employer Address the Hazard/Issue?

Do You Consider the Issue Resolved?	Completed on: / /
☐ Yes ☐ No	WHSR Signature: / /

TO BE COMPLETED IF THE REPRESENTATIVE INTENDS TO NOTIFY THE INSPECTOR

7) Details of Employer	8) Details of Principal Contractor (Only if employed on construction work)
Employer/Company Name:	Principal Contractor Name:
Address where you are normally employed:	
	Employer Phone Number: ( )

Written Complaints and Issues

One of the main responsibilities of a supervisor is to act as a troubleshooter and deal with complaints and issues as they arise on a day-to-day basis. Minor complaints and issues are usually dealt with in a personal manner either face-to-face or sometimes over the telephone. When a complaint or issue is received in written form, then usually, the response should also be made in written form. Some companies have specific forms or standard policies and procedures for dealing with complaints, such as Requests for Information or RFIs. It is important that you are familiar with, and follow, these requirements.

The following points should be considered when dealing with complaints or issues that are in written form:

- Don't avoid the issue or complaint, treat it seriously and follow it through
- If it will take some time to investigate or resolve the issue, then advise the person who has raised the matter so that they are not left wondering what is happening
- Be aware of specific regulations of the local council or other bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency when handling complaints regarding, for instance, noise or dust pollution
- Handle complaints and issues tactfully in situations where the public and the media may be involved, so that the reputation of the company is protected

Request for Information (RFI)

Supervisors in the construction industry are often called on to fulfill a request for information (RFI). Such requests often originate from the company' main office, and may be related to a legal dispute, accounting department enquiry or a public complaint. An example of an RFI and the site supervisor's response to it is given in Case Study 3 at the end of this Topic.

The foreman's daily report, as described later in this section, is frequently used as the source document for answering RFIs.

The main points about RFIs are that they:

- (usually) require a prompt response
- are best answered by referring to job records, possibly including those from completed works
- depend on people maintaining high standards of record keeping in site offices.

Written Warnings

There may be times when a supervisor is required to issue a written warning to an employee, contractor or other person who is working within his/her area of responsibility. Warnings may be issued for a number of reasons, for example:

- A contractor behaving in an unsafe manner e.g. driving too fast in a work area
- An employee habitually late for work

Some companies have standard forms or standard procedures for written warnings and you should check with your manager to make sure that you are complying with company policies and procedures when you issue a warning. These warnings may be used as evidence, for example, in a situation where an employee is suing the company for unfair dismissal, so it is important that all written warnings are done properly and according to correct procedures. The following points should be kept in mind when completing a written warning:

- Make sure that the warning is clearly explained and accurate — record times, dates, conditions and events when necessary
- Keep it brief and to-the-point — there is no need for unnecessary information
- The warning should be free of emotion — keep it factual, avoid exaggeration, blame or personal criticism
- Explain the procedure, your expectations and the likely consequences of non-cooperation to the person receiving the warning so that he/she can modify his/her behaviour accordingly
- Set a follow-up date for review if necessary
- Save a copy of the written warning, making sure that it is stored in a secure manner and that confidentiality is maintained
- Follow company policies and procedures — send copies to your manager, the union etc., as required

Any other information that is relevant to the warning should be noted in your diary or otherwise recorded and saved. This might include, for example, details of conversations that you had with witnesses to an incident.

Managing Written Communications

Written communications are part of the assets of a company as they represent a collection of information, data and knowledge. These documents should be managed carefully to ensure that they are kept safe and available for use or referral when required. There are legal requirements to retain documents in some cases. This might occur, for instance, where the documents may refer to a workplace accident or else they may contain financial data that relates to taxation claims. It is important that this type of documentation is stored in a secure manner and that confidentiality of sensitive information is maintained.

Storing Information

A well-organised filing system is an essential on construction sites, to enable efficient handling, storage and retrieval of the many forms, letters, memos, invoices, receipts, and other paper records that inevitably accumulate. If you follow good housekeeping practices, you will be able retrieve information quickly and easily and avoid frustrating searches for lost or misplaced documents.

Emails can be saved on a computer and these documents and other important information such as letters or personnel files that are stored on the computer should be saved to the hard disk regularly. Important data and files should also be saved to a back up file and a copy kept in an external location as a safety precaution against loss due to fire, theft, flood etc.

Confidentiality

Much of the information that a supervisor collects will be confidential and should be stored carefully so that it cannot fall into the wrong hands. Confidential information could include personal details about employees and also details of contract bids, recommendations or legal communications. Most companies have strict systems in place to maintain confidentiality of data including the use of restricted access to computers and files, use of passwords, pin numbers and other security measures to prevent unauthorised access.

Security

Unauthorised access to a company's documents and data must also be prevented by the use of good security measures. File cabinets and offices should be kept securely locked to prevent the theft or copying of information and also theft or damage of computers and other equipment.

Written Progress Reports

Supervisors may be required to submit written progress reports on a regular basis to provide information to managers and clients so that they can get an accurate picture of the current status of work. The type of report that is needed will depend on the company's standard procedures or the client's specific requirements. Reports should be accurate and concise and should use good written communication skills, such as, attention to spelling and correct punctuation. Regardless of the format of the report, it will contain some or all of the following elements:

- Report on work progress
- Report on costs
- Report on staff
- Report on general conditions

Report on Work Progress

An important part of the progress report is the schedule of activities that gives a written and/or visual comparison between estimated and actual progress on the project. This information may be presented in the form of a chart or diagram such as a:

- Bar chart
- Line chart
- Critical path network

This information is vital for managers and clients to get a good overview of how the project is progressing and whether there are any areas of concern. In addition, the schedule can highlight areas where cost savings can be made, plant utilisation can be improved or where extra resources (e.g. labour or materials) may be required to keep the project on target.

The construction schedule may, for example, record activities such as stripping, earthworks, drainage or bitumen surfacing and show the actual progress compared to planned progress at that date. The comparison may also be shown as a percentage e.g. excavation is 50% complete.

Report on Costs

A progress report on costs is also important to managers and clients so that they can keep close control of expenditure. These costs may be actual costs or when details are not available, estimates are made. Details of costs could include:

- Plant
- Labour
- Sub contractor payments
- Materials

As well as recording direct costs, the progress report might also include indirect costs (e.g. supervision and administration) and overhead costs such as Head Office fees and charges.

The process of estimating and recording costs is covered in more detail in Topic 3 in this training series, Estimating and Cost Control.

Report on Staff

The progress report may record staff information such as:

- Absenteeism
- Sick leave
- Holidays
- Overtime

The report might also provide a breakdown and summary of work hours. It could also include details of toolbox or team meetings as well as any workplace incidents requiring counselling.

Report on General Conditions

The progress report may contain general information that is relevant to the job such as weather conditions or local activities that may have caused delays or had an impact on the progress of the work. This part of the report may also include details on any contact with the public, meetings with councils, clients, unions or sub contractors. The report should contain a section on safety with a summary of accidents, incidents or injuries with full details of any serious events.

In some cases, progress reports can contain other information about areas of activity that may be of special interest, for example, environmental or heritage concerns.