



Australian Government

Department of Employment and Workplace Relations  
Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner



## FACT SHEET

# WHS Accreditation Scheme Requirements for WHS Management Systems

This factsheet discusses the obligation for accredited companies to use substantially the same Work Health and Safety Management System (WHSMS) on all projects it carries out and will assist companies applying for accreditation.

More information about the Scheme and our guiding legislation can be found on our [website](#).

**Builders accredited under the Work Health and Safety Accreditation Scheme (the Scheme) must use substantially the same WHSMS on all worksites where it is the head contractor. This means accredited builders must use their accredited WHSMS on government-funded as well as privately funded projects.**

Scheme accreditation is designed to uplift a builder's safety systems and onsite practices. By requiring substantially the same WHSMS to be used on all projects, accredited builders help to improve safety standards across the industry, not just on individual projects. Not using substantively the same WHSMS on all projects would undermine the purpose of accreditation and the Scheme and cause reputational harm to the builder and the OFSC.

### What does 'substantially' the same WHSMS mean?

It means the safety systems and processes should be largely identical regardless of what site you're on. So, if your WHSMS requires a buildability review to identify hazards which are then recorded in a project risk assessment with hazard controls outlined in SWMS, the OFSC would expect to see this approach implemented on all projects.

It's ok for systems to have some minor differences to account for the specific requirements of State WHS laws or Codes of Practice. It's also ok for a WHSMS to set additional requirements on a specific project because of the hazards present at that project (e.g. additional ground condition requirements on sites with poor soil stability).

**Further information:** Visit the FSC website at [www.fsc.gov.au](http://www.fsc.gov.au)

Contact the FSC Assist Line on **1800 652 500** | Contact the OFSC via email at [ofsc@dewr.gov.au](mailto:ofsc@dewr.gov.au)

## What do builders need to do?

When applying for accreditation, a company's Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent) will be asked to sign a declaration agreeing to implement substantially the same WHSMS on all worksites going forward. This declaration extends to all worksites where the company acts as the head contractor and applies **regardless of whether the project is Government funded or not** (i.e. privately funded projects must also use the accredited WHSMS). This declaration must also be re-submitted and affirmed each time a company applies for reaccreditation.

## Is there any flexibility?

Accredited companies come in all sizes and types of construction work, and each company's circumstances will be different. The OFSC's expectation is that a company will implement substantially the accredited WHSMS on all sites where it is the head contractor except in limited circumstances.

**Table 1: Circumstances where an exemption may be permitted**

Circumstance	Possible reasons
Applying for accreditation*	<p>If there are compelling reasons why it is not possible to immediately implement the same WHSMS on all projects, the OFSC will consider granting a transition period on a case-by-case basis. This request can be made by submitting the required form. A limited transition period will only be considered when you are first accredited with the Scheme.</p> <p><i>For example, if a company has already commenced a project using a different WHSMS before accreditation is granted, changing to the accredited WHSMS mid-project may increase safety risks. In this case, there may be good reason to allow the project to complete under the original WHSMS or provide a sensible time for the project to transition to the accredited WHSMS.</i></p> <p>You must still implement the accredited WHSMS on all Scheme projects (funded by the Government that fall under the relevant financial thresholds) you undertake as head contractor once accredited, even if a transition period has been allowed.</p>
Acquisitions and restructure	<p>If your company is applying for accreditation and is undergoing significant business changes, such as acquiring/being acquired by another business with current projects using a different WHSMS, it is understood there may be some changes to the applicants WHSMS. Please discuss this with your OFSC contact as soon as practicable.</p>
Joint venture/alliances	<p>Where a joint venture or alliance is taking place, the OFSC's expectation is that an accredited company's WHSMS will be nominated and followed on the project. More information about joint ventures is available on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>

\*Transition periods/exemptions are not available when a company is applying for reaccreditation.

*This factsheet contains general information only and is not a substitute for independent professional advice. Further information about the intended purpose and use of this factsheet can be accessed on the Office of the Federal Safety Commissioner's [website](#); specifically, the disclaimer available at <https://www.fsc.gov.au/disclaimer> applies to this publication.*

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