

Safety Share

Practicing Emergency Procedures



Why Emergency Planning Matters

Practicing emergency procedures is critical and can save lives. Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA): Division 4, Clause 43 mandates that a Person Conducting a Business Undertaking (PCBU) must prepare, implement, maintain, and test effective emergency plans for the workplace.

Emergency Evacuation and Response Plans should set out clear, site-specific instructions to protect workers, contractors, visitors and the public (if relevant) if something goes wrong.

Practicing emergency procedures ensures:

- Rapid, co-ordinated response to emergencies such as trench collapse, fire or serious injury.
- Safe evacuation, including from excavations, confined spaces, and high-risk areas.
- Clear communication with emergency services.
- Preparedness for high-risk activities, such as excavation and working at height.

Emergency planning is not optional. An untested plan is not an effective plan.

Why we practice (not just write a plan)

Testing and practicing through regular emergency response drills and evacuation exercises provides workers with the knowledge and competency to implement the emergency procedures.

Practicing emergency procedures:

- Highlights gaps before a real emergency occurs.
- Ensures people know what to do under pressure.
- Confirms equipment is accessible and working.
- Reinforces “no self-rescue” expectations, especially for trench collapses.
- Builds confidence and coordination across the site.

In an emergency, people fall back on what they’ve practiced, not what’s written down.

Emergencies don’t give warnings

Practicing emergency procedures saves time, reduces panic, and protects lives.

Ensure you know:

- Your role in an emergency.
- Where your emergency assembly point is.
- How to raise the alarm.