



PERMIT TO WORK

SCOPE: *This document represents best practice advice available and considered pertinent after consultation within the membership and incorporating HSE guidance. It is intended to give guidance on permit to work systems.*

1. INTRODUCTION

A permit to work system is a formal document which complements a safe system of work procedure and when the specified controls are followed it will help to minimise risk of injury to employees, contractors and third parties and to property and the environment and in particular when work with foreseeable high hazard content is undertaken and because of this the work requires a higher degree of control. The permit sets out the work to be done, precautions to be taken and the responsibilities of individuals.

2. LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

A permit to work system will be required to ensure no employee is subjected to any significant risk, and also in fulfilling legal obligations under:

- Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974;
- The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999.

3. WHEN A PERMIT TO WORK IS REQUIRED

A permit to work system is required or should be considered whenever works intended to be carried out may adversely affect the safety of people, plant or the environment. Permit to work systems may not be required for routine maintenance activities in a non-hazardous environment but should be considered for:

- Non-production work (e.g. hazardous maintenance activities, inspections, testing);
- Works where two or more individuals (or teams) need to co-ordinate activities to complete the job safely;
- Jobs where there is a transfer of work and responsibilities from one contractor to the other;
- Non-routine operations or activities.

As a general guide a permit to work system may be required for work activities that involve:

- Entry into a confined space;
- Hot work;
- High Voltage Electrical work;
- Electrical installation work by contractor;
- Mechanical installation work by contractor;
- Installation work requiring cranes covered under LOLER and/or requiring traffic control, cordoning off area;

- Excavation work;
- Working at height e.g. roof work, scaffolding, extension ladders;
- Demolition work;
- All work covered by the Control of Asbestos at Work Regs 2006;
- Where the work that is to be carried out by a contractor who is not under the direct supervision of the person who has operating control of the equipment;
- In other situations outside of the above where the business deems it necessary to issue a permit to work.

4. EXEMPTIONS FROM PERMIT TO WORK REQUIREMENTS

Exemptions from permit to work requirements may be confined to work for activities that have been identified as low-risk by means of a risk assessment and need no prior preparation by others and for routine maintenance activities in a non-hazardous environment.

5. ISSUER

Persons responsible within a business for issuing permits are trained and competent to set out the conditions under which work will be carried out. Authorisation to issue a permit is not transferrable unless that person has been trained and competent. A list of those persons authorised to issue permits should be maintained.

The issuer of a permit to work is responsible for determining the nature and extent of the work to be carried out and its interaction with other activities so that the necessary actions may be completed and the residual risks understood prior to issuing the permit to work.

6. ACCEPTOR

The person responsible for accepting the permit must be trained and competent to execute control over the work. Contractors who accept a permit must at the time the permit is issued be given adequate information and training on the permit system, the restrictions it imposes, and the precautions it requires.

The acceptor of a permit to work is responsible for:

- Explaining fully to the issuer the nature of all inherent hazards where these exist in the execution of the task so that the issuer may assess the extent of possible interaction between such introduced hazards and plant conditions.
- Ensuring that the nature and extent of the work does not differ from that described to the issuer, and that all those under the acceptor's control understands the limitations and the precautions that they are required to take during execution of the work.

The permit should also list "Others" who are working under the permit.

7. HANDOVER

If the work is carried over to another shift, e.g. the work takes longer than expected; then a shift handover procedure should be in place. This handover procedure should ensure that the incoming shift is aware of any outstanding permit-controlled jobs, the status of those jobs, and the status of the plant.

Work-in-progress should be left in a condition that can be reliably communicated to - and understood by - the oncoming shift.

8. CONSIDERATION OF HAZARDS

The issuer and the acceptor must understand the hazards associated with the task.

9. REQUIREMENTS BEFORE WORK COMMENCES

Before work starts, due consideration must be given to the following aspects and the information recorded on the permit:

- There must be clear and concise definition of the work to be done.

Positive identification of the:

- Equipment to be worked on & means of isolation;
- Area boundary in which the proposed activity will take place.

The means by which preparation has been made to make the equipment or place safe to work on or in. The issuer should be satisfied that all hazards have been identified and, wherever practicable, eliminated or reduced, and that appropriate supporting authorisations are in place.

Identify the residual hazardous substances and suspected and potential hazards.

Communicate all relevant information (including hazards and controls) to all personnel involved.

Date and time at which the permit comes into effect.

10. ISSUE AND ACCEPTANCE OF A PERMIT TO WORK

Prior to the issue of the permit to work, the issuer and the acceptor should liaise to ensure that all aspects have been adequately covered.

Issue of the permit to work is required to be formally recorded by the signature of the issuer.

Acceptance of the permit to work is required to be formally recorded by the signature of the acceptor.

Normally, only one permit to work should be issued at any one time for any one item of equipment.

The authority that work can commence rests with the issuer.

The issuer must personally inspect the equipment and area to ensure that the conditions and proposed precautions are adequate and that the work is safe to proceed.

A business should retain the right to stop work in progress if circumstances dictate.

Prior to the work commencing, all personnel involved in that activity should have a clear understanding of the extent of the work agreed, any conditions and hazards remaining, and the precautions specified.

Once accepted, the acceptor should be responsible for seeing that the stated precautions are complied with, and that the extent of the work is confined to that agreed.

Where the duration of the activity involves continuation by other persons representing the issuing and/or accepting authorities, e.g. extends over a shift change, the permit should be cancelled and a new permit issued.

Consideration should be given to the coordination of different teams (e.g. maintenance, operations), working in proximity to each other, that could result in potential Health & Safety clashes.

Where the execution of a given task involves support activity by other functions, one person who is designated as having the principal role should be the acceptor. The appropriate representative for each support activity should countersign the permit, thereby recording their understanding of the stated conditions, and acknowledging their direct responsibility for compliance insofar as it applies to their activity. The work pertaining to that support activity should not start before that counter signature has been obtained.

11. DOCUMENT CONTROL

In order to avoid simultaneous issue of permits to work from more than one book for a particular item of equipment or related items of equipment or plant areas, permits to work should be issued from one book.

12. DURATION OF PERMITS

The period of validity of the permit should be no greater than the duration of the task i.e. one permit per shift or follow an individual company's permit procedure.

12.1 Termination (Sign Off)

The permit to work is terminated when:

- the agreed work is complete;
- there is a change of intent with respect to the work to be carried out;
- the business requires the work to cease;
- termination may take place even though the agreed work is incomplete;
- termination should be recorded by signature of both issuer and the acceptor;
- where work has not been completed, the state of the plant or equipment and any limitations on its use should be recorded.
- on completion of the work, return the permit to the authorised person who issued it.
- ensure that the work area is left clean and tidy and that any debris is removed from the work area and disposed of appropriately.

12.2 Out of Hours Permitting

Out of hours permitting should be the exception and not the norm. Rules for out of hours permitting will vary according to individual company's permit procedure.

13. TRAINING

All personnel approved to either issue or accept permits to work must have sufficient training and experience to enable them to discharge their nominated responsibilities.

Effective training and competence of workers involved in a permit to work system is essential in achieving a safe system of work. The Manager is responsible for ensuring that personnel to be actively

involved in the permit to work system have received training and understand the working environment, associated hazards and the control measures required to manage the risks presented by hazards from the work to be done.

All personnel whose activities are likely to be controlled by the permit to work system receive sufficient information for them to be fully aware of the systems requirements.

An individual's training record must be updated with details of any training that is done. The records must show if the prescribed level of competence have been achieved.

14. ESSENTIALS OF A PERMIT TO WORK FORM

The permit to work form must assist in communicating between everyone involved. It should be designed by the business issuing the permit to work. Separate permit to work forms may be required for different tasks, such as hot work and entry into confined spaces, so that sufficient emphasis can be given to the particular hazards present and precautions required. The essential elements of a permit to work form are listed below.

- Permit to work title
- Permit number
- Job location
- Plant identification & points of isolation
- Work to be done
- Hazard identification
- Control measures e.g. fire watch
- Protective equipment
- Issue and acceptance of permit
- Date and time
- Others working under the permit
- Handback/sign off

15. PERMIT DISPLAY

The display of a legible copy of the issued permit at the scene of the activity by which all persons involved in the activity can be alerted to the conditions agreed and recorded. It is necessary for Management to carry out periodic examination of work in progress to satisfy them that the system is being operated to a satisfactory standard by all parties.

16. PERMIT TO WORK REVIEW

Review of the permit to work system is required when:

- An accident or incident occurs, and any subsequent investigation identifies specific changes in relation to permit to work for the work task;
- There is reason to suspect that there is inadequate control of the work task.

17. MONITORING

Permit to work methods should be monitored by supervision to ensure compliance with step-by-step work activity instructions and control measures. Management should be informed if any non-conformance is identified during the monitoring of the permit to work system. Initial, date and time should be recorded to confirm the check has been carried out.

18. RECORD KEEPING

Records of the following must be kept:

- Copies of issued permits for as long as the business deems it necessary or as per regulatory requirements;
- Records of training;
- Servicing and maintenance records relating to equipment used.

19. FURTHER INFO

The following HSE publications may provide further advice:

- HS(G)48 Reducing error and influencing behaviour.
- HS(G)65 Successful health & safety management.
- HS(G)51 Storage of flammable liquids in containers.