

Contents

1. OBJECTIVE.....	2
2. BACKGROUND	2
3. SCOPE.....	2
4. WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?	2
5. PROCEDURE/IMPLEMENTATION	2
5.1. Occupational Noise	2
5.2. Air Quality.....	2
5.3. Hazmat.....	3
5.4. Dust, Gas, Vapours and Mists	3
5.5. Legionella.....	3
5.6. Thermal Comfort	4
5.7. Communicable Diseases (Population Related)	4
5.8. Biological Safety	4
5.9. Vibration	5
5.10. Ergonomics	5
6. Responsibilities.....	6
6.1. Executive Leaders	6
6.2. Operational Leaders	6
6.3. Staff, students or contractors	6
6.4. Visitors	6
6.5. HSW Team	6
7. Definitions	6
8. Supporting Documents.....	7

1. OBJECTIVE

To detail the arrangements that are in place at RMIT to maintain a high standard of occupational hygiene. The arrangements in this process are implemented in order to reduce the risk of illness/injury caused by biological agents, noise and air quality.

2. BACKGROUND

N/A

3. SCOPE

The Occupational process applies to all RMIT colleges, portfolios and activities globally.

4. WHAT MUST GO RIGHT?

The 'What must go right?' principles applicable to this process are:

- All staff, students and contractors are aware of the guidance documents related to Occupational Hygiene and the processes are implemented where applicable as a matter of course
- There is a widespread understanding across RMIT of the risks related to environmental, air quality, water quality and biological hazards, and how those risks are mitigated
- There are no significant outbreaks of preventable communicable diseases in the RMIT community
- There are no instances of occupational noise-related hearing loss in the RMIT community

5. PROCEDURE/IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Occupational Noise

Hazardous noise can damage a person's hearing and could also create high levels of stress. It may also affect a staff member's ability to hear instructions clearly, which could pose hazards to the safety of the work and learning environment.

RMIT must effectively manage health and safety risks associated with noise-related hearing loss. This should be done in accordance with **HR - HSW-PR09 Risk Management** process.

RMIT must ensure noise emission levels are as low as possible at all stages of workplace activity, and identify plant, equipment and tasks that may produce hazardous levels of noise.

HR - HSW-PR-35-WI05 - Guidance Noise provides detailed guidance on how occupational noise should be managed in the work and learning environment.

5.2. Air Quality

Persons in the workplace should not be exposed to a substance or mixture in an airborne concentration that exceeds the exposure standard for that substance or mixture. Air monitoring must be undertaken where there is a risk to health.

Completing a risk assessment will identify the hazards present and the control mechanisms required, which may include air monitoring. This is the most effective method for identifying whether a risk to a workers health exists or

not. **HR - HSW-PR35-WI01 - Guidance Air Monitoring** provides detailed guidance on the circumstances under which air monitoring should take place.

5.3. Hazmat

RMIT has developed a Hazardous Building Materials Management Plan (HBMMP) for the management of hazardous materials identified within their Australian property portfolio (the site) and also serves as a guideline to RMIT overseas infrastructure.

The HBMMP is located online at Property Services RMIT webpage and will assist RMIT with managing hazardous materials related health and environmental risks at the site.

For the purposes of the HBMMP, RMIT have included the following hazardous materials:

- Asbestos containing materials (ACM)
- Lead containing paint (LCP)
- Ozone depleting substance (ODS)
- Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) containing capacitors in electrical fittings
- Synthetic mineral fibre (SMF) materials

5.4. Dust, Gas, Vapours and Mists

Exposure to airborne substances or mixtures in the work and learning environment can occur through inhalation, absorption through the skin or ingestion. Most exposure occurs through the inhalation of vapours, dusts, fumes or gases. For some chemicals, absorption through the skin may also be a significant source of exposure.

The response of the body from exposure to airborne substances and mixtures depends on the nature of the substance, the health effects it can cause and the amount of the substance or mixture absorbed by the body. Individuals also have differing abilities to metabolise chemicals which can cause considerable variation in the toxic effects between people. The extent to which a person is exposed depends on the concentration of the substance or mixture in the air, the amount of time exposed and the effectiveness of controls. Substances and mixtures may cause immediate acute health effects or it may be decades before effects on the body become evident. Known factors that can increase risks to workers include, skin absorption, sensitisation and mixtures of substances.

HR - HSW-PR35-WI01 - Air Monitoring

5.5. Legionella

Legionella bacteria occur naturally in low concentrations in rivers, ponds, and soil. When inhaled, airborne Legionella may cause Legionnaires' disease, a lung infection that produces pneumonia that can lead to death.

Water-based cooling towers associated with large air-conditioning systems can provide the conditions necessary for Legionella bacteria to proliferate and be released as an inhalable mist or aerosol.

At RMIT we must ensure that cooling towers under our control are well-managed and maintained to prevent bacteria (including Legionella) from reaching concentrations that may result in adverse health effects.

HR - HSW-PR35-WI02 - Guidance Legionella provides detailed guidance on maintenance and testing of cooling towers and related plant and equipment to prevent the proliferation of Legionella.

5.6. Thermal Comfort

There are no known health effects from thermal discomfort. However, extremes in air temperature may have adverse effects on productivity.

Thermal comfort is not the same as heat stress. It is a condition of mind which expresses satisfaction with the thermal environment. Due to large variations from person to person, it is difficult to satisfy everyone within the same thermal environment.

HR - HSW-PR35-WI03 - Guidance Thermal Comfort provides some information and guidance on factors affecting thermal comfort and recommendations for optimising indoor thermal comfort.

5.7. Communicable Diseases (Population Related)

A communicable disease can vary in severity from the common cold to diseases that can be life threatening illnesses, which may cause death or a debilitating illness that may involve hospital treatment and prevent staff attending work and students attending class for several days or more.

Groups who may be at specific risk at RMIT include cleaners, plumbing and waste disposal workers, first aid officers, those who work in biological laboratory or field environments, and staff using syringes as part of their work requirements where there is a potential for needle stick injury.

HR - HSW-PR35-WI04 - Guidance Communicable Diseases provides detailed guidance on the prevention and management of various communicable and infectious diseases.

5.8. Biological Safety

Biological materials, particularly microorganisms, can have special hazards associated with them. RMIT, as an educational and research institution, seeks to provide a structured approach to protect the environment from accidental release, and to prevent exposure of staff and students in these areas to hazards presented by biological matter.

Groups who may be at specific risk include staff or students who carry out work, research or study at RMIT and personnel who may handle or are potentially exposed to biological materials. This can be in a clinical environment, laboratory, research facility, plant, insect or animal facility.

Biological materials that have associated hazards include, but are not limited to:

- Microorganisms (such as bacteria, fungi, protozoa, viruses); animals (including their tissues, dander, blood or body fluids and excreta);
- Plants and insects (including fluids, hairs, or parts of a whole organism);
- Human blood, tissues, body fluids and excreta (or components of these)
- Materials that have been contaminated or are potentially contaminated with infectious microorganisms;
- Imported biological materials; and
- Products and bi-products (including any of the items listed above) that could be toxic, allergenic or in other ways hazardous.

HR - HSW-PR44 - Biological Safety Process and guidance material provides technical guidance to all personnel who work in a biological laboratory and who actively handle or manage biological agents and toxins, as well as other valuable laboratory material.

5.9. Vibration

Hand–arm vibration (HAV) is vibration transmitted to a person’s hand and arm when using hand-held powered devices or hand-guided machinery like while holding materials being processed by machines. HAV is commonly experienced by people who use jack-hammers, chainsaws, grinders, drills, riveters and impact wrenches.

Regular long-term exposure to excessive HAV can disrupt a person’s circulation in their hand and forearm, and cause damage to nerves, tendons, muscles, bones and hand and arm joints.

Whole-body Vibration (WBV) is vibration transmitted to the whole body by the surface supporting it, for example through a seat or the floor. It is commonly experienced by drivers, operators and passengers in mobile plant when travelling over uneven surfaces. Whole-Body Vibration may also be experienced while standing, for example standing on platforms attached to concrete crushing plant. WBV includes sharp impacts like shocks and jolts.

Exposure to WBV mainly occurs in vehicles used off-road or on un-sealed roads, for example on farms and construction, mine and quarry sites. It can also occur in other places like in small, fast boats and in helicopters.

If you are a staff member or you manage staff or contractors who are exposed to (or is likely to be exposed to) vibration, action is required to eliminate or minimise vibration exposures by immediately modifying work methods or organisation of work to reduce exposure to staff.

Measuring and assessing vibration should be conducted by personnel with appropriate qualifications and/or with experience, knowledge and skills. Examples include: occupational hygienists, ergonomists and other work health and safety professionals.

Note- There is evidence that persons who are exposed to vibration and noise at the same time are more likely to suffer hearing loss than persons exposed to the same level of noise alone. Exposure to both vibration and noise is also understood to increase musculoskeletal problems.

5.10. Ergonomics

Ergonomics can be defined simply as the study of work. More specifically, ergonomics is the science of designing the job to fit the worker, rather than physically forcing the worker’s body to fit the job. Adapting tasks, work stations, tools, and equipment to fit the worker can help reduce physical stress on a worker’s body and eliminate many potentially serious, disabling work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Leaders are to identify ergonomics related hazards within the work and learning environment in consultation with staff, students, contractors, the HSR and the Senior Advisor, Health and Safety (as required).

Ergonomic related hazards and risks may be identified through the following means:

- Consultation with staff, students, contractors and the HSR;
- Workplace observations, inspections and audits;
- Hazard and incident reporting;
- Pre-planning for new work activities, locations or equipment;
- Review of incident, injury, hazard and claims data;

HR - HSW-PR30 - Workplace Ergonomics Process and Guidance documents provide information and guidance on ergonomic factors affecting workplace set-up and for optimising work quality.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Executive Leaders

- Ensure there are resources available to implement this process in their area of control
- Review performance indicators on a regular basis

6.2. Operational Leaders

- Understand the implications of each guidance included under this process and implement the requirements in their area of control
- Identify hazards related to noise, airborne contaminants, thermal discomfort, biological hazards and legionella, assess the risks and establish and implement the controls for these risks.
- Monitor compliance with this process and report on outcome

6.3. Staff, students or contractors

- Follow this process and the applicable guidance documents, and all reasonable instructions relating to health surveillance
- Follow the direction of RMIT in relation to occupational hygiene requirements
- Report any hazard to your operational leader and enter a report in P.R.I.M.E relating to noise, airborne contaminants, thermal discomfort, biological hazards and legionella, and any other hazards that they identify in their workplace. Please refer to HSW-PR-10 Incident Management and Investigation Process and supporting documents for guidance.

6.4. Visitors

- Comply with the requirements of induction
- Comply with all safety rules and instruction

6.5. HSW Team

- Disseminate information and guidance on Occupational Hygiene risks and controls
- Provide training where necessary around controls of hazards relating to noise, airborne contaminants, thermal discomfort, biological hazards and legionella, in accordance with HSW-PR06 Training, Competence and Awareness.
- Regularly review this process in consultation with relevant staff
- Develop and report on KPIs relevant to this process
- Monitor compliance with this process and report on outcomes

7. Definitions

Defines any key terms and acronyms relating to the process where they apply.

Term / acronym	Definition
Executive Leaders	Heads of School, Deans, Senior Managers
HSW	Health, Safety and Wellness
Operational Leaders	Line Managers, supervisors

Senior Leaders

Council

Airborne
contaminant

A contaminant in the form of fume, mist, gas, vapour or dust, and includes a microorganism. An airborne contaminant of this type is a potentially harmful substance that is either not naturally in the air or is present in an unnaturally high concentration and to which staff, students and contractors may be exposed in their work and learning environment.

8. Supporting Documents

Lists the supporting and related Processes and Guidance Material, Legislative references, Australian and International Standards etc. that may be useful references for process users

- HSW Commitment
- HR - HSW-EL04 - Health and Wellbeing
- HR - HSW-PR09 - HSW Risk Management
- HR - HSW-PR04 - HSW Records Management
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI05 - Occupational Noise Guidance
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI01 - Air Monitoring
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI02 - Legionella Guidance
- HR - HSW-PR35-WI03 - Thermal Comfort Guidance
- Guidance Communicable Diseases - HSW-PR35-WI03
- HR - HSW-PR44 - Biological Safety
- HR - HSW-PR30 - Office Ergonomics
- HR - HSW-PR10 - Incident Management & Investigation
- Hazardous Building Materials Management Plan (HBMMP)