

Permit to work

Risk assessments, method statements (RAMS) and work instructions or procedures may be suitable for many activities on construction sites. However, there are often potentially high-risk activities on sites that require extra care to make sure they are carried out in a healthy and safe manner.

A permit to work (PTW) can be used to accompany RAMS to help regulate such high-risk activities. A PTW is a more formal system, stating exactly what work is to be done, by whom and when, and which parts are safe.

They are not a replacement for a suitable and sufficient risk assessment: they are used to support the risk assessment. Permits are effectively a means of communication between site managers, supervisors and those who carry out the work.

Examples of activities that PTWs are often needed for include:

- entry into a confined space
- isolation of high-voltage electrical equipment
- disturbance of systems carrying fluid or gas under pressure
- hot works (tasks that generate heat or sparks)
- excavation work where services may be present.



Essential points of permit-to-work (PTW) systems

A senior manager should be assigned responsibility to ensure that an appropriate PTW system is introduced.

- Procedures should be established and maintained for all work to be done under the PTW system.
- Sufficient resources should be provided to enable the PTW system to be implemented properly.
- Everyone using the PTW system must be trained on how to follow the system, and information must be provided to any other persons affected by the permit.
- PTWs are a formal, dated and time-limited certificate signed by a properly authorised and competent person.
- For permit receipts and shift handovers to be effective, they should be:
 - conducted face-to-face
 - two-way – with both participants taking joint responsibility for ensuring accurate communication via verbal and written means.
- Arrangements should be made for the workforce to be made aware of the permits and systems, and trained in their operation.
- The PTW should contain all relevant information, be correct, and be presented in a suitable format (e.g. not complex or ambiguous: a single-sided A4 permit might be sufficient dependent on the work/task).
- Keep the PTW for the higher-risk health and safety issues specific to the task – don't use it for communicating routine safety information such as housekeeping, which should be covered in the risk assessment.
- Roles and responsibilities – it must be clear who is in charge, and who does what, with no important gaps or overlaps.
- The person responsible should assess the work and check safety at each stage.
- All relevant information must be communicated to all people involved, and you should make sure that other people who may be affected are aware of the activities.
- The PTW system should be monitored to ensure that it is effective and correctly applied.
- Arrangements should be in place to manage any non-compliance with the system.
- Arrangements should be in place for the permit-to-work system to be audited and reviewed.
- Copies of permits, or records of their issue, may need to be kept for a specified period to enable auditing or for the purpose of incident investigation.

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Permit to work *continued*

An example of a permit to work form, including the essential elements as identified by the Health and Safety Executive.

Section 1 – Issue – details of the work to be completed by a competent person and signed by themselves and the workers	
1. Permit title	
2. Permit reference number	
3. Dates and times that the work will be carried out	– this should not usually exceed one working day.
4. Location of the work to be undertaken	– this needs to be as specific as possible, and not just the address of the site.
5. Identification of any plant and equipment to be used	
6. Description of the work	– should be completed in conjunction with the people actually carrying out the work, to ensure that it accurately represents the work as it will be completed.
7. Specific hazards identified	– these will come from the risk assessment, and include residual hazards and hazards associated with the work.
8. Precautions required and emergency procedures	– other signatures on the PTW will certify that any control measures necessary for the job to start have been implemented (for example, using the lock-out, tag-out, try-out (LOTOTO) procedure on an electrical supply, or checking the atmosphere in a confined space).
9. Personal protective equipment	
10. Issue	– receipt of a PTW is acknowledged by the signature of the person in charge of the work, who keeps a copy: another copy will be kept by the person issuing the PTW.
Section 2 – Acceptance	
The people doing the job should sign the PTW to show that they understand the work that is to be completed, the hazards involved and any necessary precautions to be taken. This also confirms that all relevant information within the permit has been communicated to them, and that they agree to work according to it.	
Section 3 – Extension or shift handover procedures	
If the work is not completed in the timescale, then it is usually necessary to make the work area safe so that everyone can leave before the permit expires, and for it to be cancelled. However, it may be safe for the authorised person who issued the permit to extend the expiry time, and for the work area to be re-occupied. This needs to be signed off by the permit issuer, who must certify that the work area remains safe and that new permit users have been made aware of the permit details. A new expiry time must also be provided.	
Section 4 – Completion of the work	
This is signed by both the person in charge of the work and the person who issued the permit, and certifies that the work has been completed with all controls followed. It also certifies that the work area, including any plant or equipment, has been made safe and can be returned to general use.	
Section 5 – Cancellation and final sign off	
When the work is completed, or the expiry time has passed, the person in charge of the work must return their copy of the permit to the person who issued it, and the permit is then cancelled or extended.	