

ADVISORY NOTICE

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Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs) Update

Earlier this year, we advised members that Australia will transition from Workplace Exposure Standards (WES) to mandatory Workplace Exposure Limits (WELs) from 1 December 2026, following the adoption of Safe Work Australia's revised framework for airborne contaminants.

Members should note that WHS Ministers have since considered proposed revised exposure limits for nine substances, benzene, chlorine, copper, formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide, hydrogen sulphide, nitrogen dioxide, respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and titanium dioxide and did not reach the required majority support for their adoption. As a result, the existing exposure limits for these substances will remain in place from 1 December 2026 while further analysis and consultation are undertaken. This outcome does not affect the broader implementation of the WEL framework, which remains scheduled to commence as planned.

Source: Safe Work Australia – *Decision Regulation Impact Statement: Proposed workplace exposure limits for 9 chemicals* (24 June 2026):

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/decision-regulation-impact-statement-proposed-workplace-exposure-limits-9-chemicals>

Chemical	Current WES
Benzene	TWA 1 ppm (3.2 mg/m ³)
Chlorine	STEL 1 ppm (3 mg/m ³)
Copper (dusts & mists, as Cu)	TWA 1 mg/m ³
Copper (fume, as Cu)	TWA 0.2 mg/m ³
Formaldehyde	TWA 1 ppm (1.2 mg/m ³); STEL 2 ppm (2.5 mg/m ³)
Hydrogen cyanide	Peak Limitation 10 ppm (11 mg/m ³)
Hydrogen sulphide	STEL 10 ppm (14 mg/m ³)
Nitrogen dioxide	TWA 3 ppm (5.6 mg/m ³); STEL 5 ppm (9.4 mg/m ³)
Respirable Crystalline Silica (RCS)	TWA 0.05 mg/m ³
Titanium dioxide	TWA 10 mg/m ³
Titanium dioxide (respirable dust)	TWA 2.5 mg/m ³

Of particular relevance to construction and mining equipment manufacturers and suppliers, the new diesel particulate matter (DPM) Workplace Exposure Limit of 0.01 mg/m³ respirable elemental carbon (8-hour TWA) remains on track to take effect from 1 December 2026. Safe Work Australia states, this change is expected to increase regulatory and customer focus on diesel engine emissions, ventilation effectiveness, filtration systems, exposure monitoring, equipment selection and the ongoing transition to lower-emission and electrified technologies.

Accordingly, OEMs and industry participants should continue preparing for the introduction of the new DPM requirements and the broader WEL framework. Organisations are encouraged to review their workplace exposure assessments, air monitoring programs, ventilation controls and health surveillance arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose. While many businesses may already have effective controls in place, the new WEL regime will raise expectations around the demonstration and verification of exposure risk management and worker protection.

End of Notice