



Welcome to the safe@work Painting Module.

Have you read the General Module, completed the test and gained your safe@work General certificate Attainment?

The Painting Module should be done **AFTER** the General Module or Review Module .

If it is some time since you have completed the General Module you should read the Review Module. The test for the Painting Module contains some questions based on the Review Module.

There are common hazards in the painting industry. It is important to learn about these hazards and how they can be controlled so people at work are not exposed to risk.

The Painting Module contains information on:

- Tools and Equipment
- Prevention of Falls
- Hazardous Substances
- Manual Handling
- Work in Enclosed Areas
- Sunburn and Heat Stress

Within the painting industry, you may be instructed to carry out work such as:

- preparing surfaces for painting (stripping and sanding timber, masking)
- mixing and applying paint
- helping to set up each job
- cleaning up at the end of the day

Your employer must explain each task *before* you start work on it. You must be provided with instruction, training and supervision. You must know the first aid and emergency arrangements too, so if anything goes wrong you will know what to do.

Key Point

It is important that your employer has taken action to control risks. You must know and follow safe working procedures – not just for your own safety, but also for the safety of others working with you.

Tools and Equipment

Note: Students in work experience programs must **NOT** operate powered tools. This information is designed to give students an understanding of the hazard and some of its risk control measures.



A range of hazardous tools and equipment is found in the painting industry. For example, painters use:

- disc and belt sanders, to help prepare surfaces for painting
- portable air compressors and spray painting equipment
- high pressure water cleaners
- powered drills
- scrapers and knives

All of these require training for the worker and safe systems of work to make sure they are used as the manufacturer intended.

When equipment hazards cannot be sufficiently reduced by engineering controls or safe working procedures, workers may also need personal protective equipment (PPE).

PPE includes safety glasses or goggles, earplugs or earmuffs, protective gloves, overalls and safety shoes or boots with reinforced toe-caps to protect your feet if any heavy or sharp items are dropped.

Your employer must:

- have a maintenance program to make sure equipment is inspected regularly, and withdrawn from use if it could be unsafe
- train workers to use equipment. If you are unsure about anything you have been asked to do, you must ask your supervisor for instruction
- provide adequate supervision
- provide any necessary PPE and instruct workers in how and when to use it

What you should do

You must follow safe work practices and procedures required by your employer or supervisor.

These may include:

- inspecting tools and equipment for defects before you use them
- immediately notifying any incident or 'near miss' to enable your supervisor to investigate its causes and take remedial action
- using PPE at all times when required

Key Point

If you feel the tool you have been given is not the right one for the job, ask your supervisor to explain how it should be used.



Prevention of Falls

Note: Students in work experience programs must **NOT** perform work at height. This information is designed to give students an understanding of the hazard and some of its risk control measures.

Falls are a major cause of workplace deaths each year. Victoria now has Regulations to cover all work where a fall of more than 2 metres could occur. These Regulations aim to reduce the number of fall-related incidents.

Painting – interior and exterior – often involves potential fall hazards. Work on roofs, at roof line or on multi-storey buildings is common. Some internal work, such as painting high ceilings, also requires work at height.

Employers must control the risks of falls in the most effective way practicable. The first questions an employer should ask are: '*Does this work have to be done at height? Is there a way of doing the job from the ground?*'

In some cases, this will be possible. Paint can in some cases be applied with a roller, using an extendable handle to reach high walls which otherwise would require work at height.

Where brushes are required, or where uneven surfaces make paint rollers impracticable, a safe method must be worked out before a painter is required to access the job. The risk control options for work at height (in their preferred order) are:

- install fall protection devices (such as temporary work platforms or scaffolding)
- use a work positioning system (such as a rope access system to position and support the worker for the duration of the task)
- use a fall injury prevention system (such as an industrial safety net or a safety harness)
- use a ladder, as long as it can be employed safely for the duration of the task – this will require procedures and training for the workers who will use it

Key Point

Ladders should always be visually inspected prior to use, to make sure no damage or wear has occurred that could make them unsafe.

An on-site risk assessment will be necessary every time work is to be done at height. No two locations will be exactly the same, and safe systems of work must be established for each job before the work begins.

Hazardous Substances

In the painting industry, you may work with hazardous substances such as solvents, wood dust and paints containing lead.



Solvents are often used as cleaners or degreasers, and as ingredients in paints and varnishes. Solvents can enter the body in a number of ways:

- when a person breathes in vapour
- through direct contact with skin
- through splashes to eyes, mouth or nose
- through the mouth from contact with food or hands

Solvents can impair memory and cause headaches, dizziness, fatigue, mood changes or nausea. Exposure to high levels of some solvents can cause liver damage, unconsciousness and death. Over a period of time, exposure can result in cancers.

Lead is a cumulative poison, and is toxic to virtually every human organ. It can have serious long term health effects. Many domestic paints, particularly in houses built before 1970, contain lead. Sanding of old paint on walls and weatherboards can release hazardous lead dust.

Spray paints also contain harmful substances. Inhaling paint fumes may cause occupational asthma. Long term exposure can affect the brain, damage the reproductive system and cause kidney or liver damage. Contact with the skin may cause dermatitis (an inflammation of the skin).

Wood dust is caused by jobs like sanding. It can cause sinus and throat irritations, asthma, bronchitis, shortness of breath, skin problems and even cancer. Employers can reduce dust by using sanders fitted with collection bags, and should provide appropriate breathing protection, such as a respirator, while work is carried out.

Key Point

Your employer must make sure you follow safe work procedures and use hazardous substances according to the manufacturer's written instructions provided on the material safety data sheet (MSDS).

You should:

- always follow safety procedures
- *not* use solvents to clean your hands
- clean up and dispose (in sealed polythene bags) of debris such as old paint stripped from timber
- wear correct personal protective equipment provided, such as a dust mask, protective overalls, suitable gloves and eye protection when sanding.

Your employer must keep an up to-date material safety data sheet (MSDS) for each substance used in your work. As a painter's job takes place in many different locations, you will need to carry the MSDS's with you to each job. They will include first aid instructions, in case of a splash which results in eye injury or accidental swallowing of a chemical.



Manual Handling

Lifting and carrying paint cans, moving scaffolding and using paint brushes in a repetitive action are some examples of manual handling tasks you may have to do in the painting industry. At times, your work tasks may involve bending and stretching, as well as twisting sideways, or working with materials and equipment above shoulder height. All of these increase the risk of manual handling injury.

It is your employer's responsibility to assess and control manual handling risks, and to provide instruction, training and supervision for manual handling activities.

Risk controls may include:

- organising the work to reduce the number of manual handling tasks involved
- making sure you do not work long periods requiring strenuous manual handling activity
- making sure the work place layout allows you enough space to move and work safely and comfortably.

Key Point

You must talk to your employer or supervisor if you find a job is too heavy or too difficult, or if you feel it may put you at risk of injury.

Work in Enclosed Areas

Some painting jobs could require working in enclosed areas, where lack of ventilation could increase exposure to paint fumes.

Key Point

The hazards of working in any enclosed area must be identified, and action taken to manage the risks, *before* the job begins.

Options that could be evaluated to reduce risks include:

- provide ventilation by opening any doors or windows in the work area
- increase air circulation by use of a portable fan
- limit the amount of time any person spends in an enclosed area
- provide workers with respirators to prevent inhalation of paint fumes

Sunburn and Heat Stress

Heat stress, sunstroke, sunburn and skin cancer can all result from prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The longer the skin is exposed, the greater the risk – regardless of tan or skin pigment.



Short-term risks of working in the sun include blistering and peeling of previously sun affected areas, acute skin reactions with certain drugs and skin creams, and sore, swollen eyes. **Long-term** risks include skin cancers, premature ageing, wasting skin tissues, clusters of tiny blood vessels and cataracts in the eye.

Your employer should assess the day's work and the expected weather conditions. Preparation for the job should include consideration of things like:

- available shade
- frequency of rest breaks
- need for regular rehydration (by drinking water, *not* soft drinks)
- awareness of each worker's heat tolerance (age, physical fitness and experience of the work can all affect a person's ability to adapt to hot or excessively humid conditions).

Heat stress can also occur as a result of working in periods of high humidity. Where possible, your employer should re-schedule strenuous work for cooler periods in the day. If this cannot be done, it may be possible to rotate jobs, to limit the time each worker spends working in potentially harmful conditions.

Protective clothing and sunscreen should always be worn when working in the sun. Head covering is important, as are loose, long sleeved shirts and long trousers in hot weather. Sunscreen should be rated SPF 15+ or more (this means it will give at least 15 times the protection that your skin would give without any covering). Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours.

Key Point

Your employer must establish safe systems for work outdoors and work in hot or humid environments. You should also know what to do if you think anyone is showing signs of heat stress or sunstroke.

Self-Assessment Questions

Now try the self-assessment questions.

There are 16 questions. If you get 12 or more correct you will be awarded a safe@work Certificate. The Principal of your school will then sign the certificate and validate it with the school stamp.