

A permit to work system is a formal recorded process for controlling potentially hazardous work. It forms a means of communication between those carrying out a job, supervisors and site managers.

A permit system has to have clear identification of who can authorise hazardous work and who stipulates the safety measures, training and instruction on the issue, use and closure of permits.

Monitoring and auditing of the system will ensure it is used properly, with clear identification of the hazardous work, permitted tasks and duration and the specific control measures. The permit itself is a paper form or electronic certificate that communicates the relevant information to the parties concerned. The document authorises certain people to carry out specific work at a specific place in a specific timeframe and gives clear detail on the required safety precautions. Permit to work systems are used when the job could affect the safety of personnel, plant or the environment. The risk assessment process should identify the need for a permit system to be used. They are normally used for non-production work, non-routine operations, jobs where safety needs two parties to coordinate work and jobs where responsibilities transfer from one person to another. The permit alone does not guarantee safety, it is part of a system that requires different stakeholders to play their part and consider foreseeable risks and necessary precautions.

Best practice standards

Best practice guidance for permit to work systems:

✓	Take all necessary steps before issuing a permit, e.g. risk assessment, instruction, isolation etc.
✓	Ensure there is proper authorisation to do the job by an authorised person and that all persons sign to acknowledge their understanding of the permit and the controls to follow.
✓	Make clear the identity, nature, extent of the work and the hazards involved. Specify limitations to the extent and timescale of the work, any hazardous environments and the required safety precautions.
✓	Ensure enough information is being included on the task as well as necessary equipment and PPE.
✓	Identify those persons involved in the job and ensure they have the necessary resources.
✓	Ensure the person in charge of the workplace is aware of the hazardous work and its timescale.



✓	Record checks made by appropriate persons on the work and the precautions taken.
✓	Ensure that the permits are appropriately displayed and kept on file.
✓	Have a procedure for when work has to stop before the job is completed.
✓	Control other work activities which may impinge on the hazardous work being undertaken.
✓	Have a hand over procedure for when the job spans more than one shift.
✓	Have a formal hand back procedure to ensure plant is reinstated in a safe condition.
✓	Use a change management process for when hazards are reassessed, for assessing the impact of change on other processes and for effectively communicating change.
✓	Consult staff before implementing a permit to work system to maximize their buy in to the system.
✓	Ensure staff are suitably trained and instructed to use the system effectively.
✓	Consider human factors such as stress and fatigue.



Further information

For more information please visit: www.QBEEurope.com/rs
or email us on RS@uk.qbe.com

Legal requirements

The use of permit to work systems is specifically required for hazardous tasks in the offshore sector by Regulation 10 of the Offshore Installations and Pipeline Works (Management and Administration) Regulations 1995. The guidance document accompanying the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 also suggests permit systems for work on electrical equipment whilst it is dead. Otherwise, there is a long list of important pieces of legislation which require management systems to control hazardous work, these include:

- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997
- Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations 2015
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations 2002
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations Regulations 1998
- Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998.

Guidance and useful information

- HSG250 Guidance on permit-to-work systems - A guide for the petroleum, chemical and allied industries
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg250.pdf
- QBE Risk Management Standard - Control of Hot Work including Permit to Work
www.qbeurope.com/risk-solutions/publications/risk-management-standards.asp

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