12.1 Responsibilities

The Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985 establishes employer and employee responsibilities for safety in the workplace. Employers are to provide for, and maintain so far as is practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risk to health.

To achieve this duty of care employers shall so far as is practicable:
- provide and maintain safe plant and systems of work.
- arrange safe systems of working with plant, vehicles, equipment, tools, machinery and substances.
- provide a safe working environment, both in the office and on site.
- provide adequate welfare facilities,
- provide employees with the information, instruction, training and supervision that they need to perform their jobs in a safe and healthy manner.

Employees must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and the health and safety of others. They must:
- co-operate with their employer with respect to actions taken by the employer to comply with the Act,
- not wilfully put at risk the health and safety of others.

12.2 Safety Systems

Employers therefore need to develop comprehensive safety systems to ensure that these requirements are addressed in a systemic way; including ensuring that employees receive adequate training (including safety induction) in occupational health and safety issues relevant to their duties; ensuring that written Safe Operating Procedures are available so that identified hazardous tasks are carried out in a safe manner; and making appropriate safety equipment (including protective clothing) available.

Written procedures for resolution of Occupational Health and Safety issues need to be developed, and clear channels of communication established. This may also include the establishment of safety committees.

12.3 Safety on Site

Before commencing any field survey, a site safety assessment should be undertaken and a Safety Plan developed. Consideration should be given to hazards likely to be encountered (including possible emergencies) and appropriate methods of dealing with them. This may involve seeking expert advice. The safety plan may begin as an outline prepared by the job Manager when completing the contract review and as part of the quality plan. It should be progressively developed, then implemented, monitored and amended as appropriate by the Job Supervisor.

The Safety Plan needs to include adequate documentation to ensure that it can be implemented effectively, and to provide evidence of compliance.

12.4 Sources of Information

A number of Regulations and Codes of Practice exist covering requirements for particular industries, and some Authorities have special training or procedural requirements. A number of Authorities also produce their own “Guidance Notes” and can provide advice and documentation relating to specialised safety practices (e.g. VicRoads Worksite Traffic Management Code of Practice).

The Victorian WorkCover Authority is the manager of Victoria's workplace safety systems, and should be consulted for further advice and information on these matters.

Copies of relevant documents should be obtained and their requirements integrated into work practices.