



# VICTORIAN TRADES HALL COUNCIL APPROVED SAFETY STANDARD

**VTHC2026.01**

# Digital Work Systems

The adoption of digital work systems in workplaces creates significant physical and psychosocial risks for workers.

Victorian Trades Hall Council endorses the following controls as the minimum protections that must apply whenever digital work systems are introduced or used in Victorian workplaces. These controls are necessary to eliminate, or where elimination is not reasonably practicable, minimise risks to workers' health and safety arising from digital work systems.

**PLEASE TURN OVER FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

## WHAT ARE DIGITAL WORK SYSTEMS?

Whether the technology is centrally managed or individually used by workers, digital work systems include:

- Algorithmic decision-making tools
- Machine learning and predictive systems
- Automated systems such as rostering, payroll, recruitment, scheduling, task allocation or performance monitoring
- Worker surveillance or behaviour-tracking systems
- Natural language processing and automated communication tools
- Artificial intelligence

Some risks associated with the implementation of digital work systems include:

- the use of excessive, discriminatory or unreasonable metrics to assess and track the performance of workers at work
- intrusive, disproportionate and excessive monitoring or surveillance of workers at work
- suppression of workers' rights to undertake lawful union activity,
- discriminatory practices or decision-making
- excessive and unreasonable work intensification.

## HIERARCHY OF CONTROL:

a) The employer must eliminate, where reasonably practicable, risks to health and safety associated with digital work systems

b) If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate these risks, the employer must minimise, so far as is reasonably practicable, these risks by one or more of the following:

- i. adapting the systems, design, organisation and management of work;
- ii. adapting work environment, conditions or methods;
- iii. promoting supportive, respectful and collaborative work relationships;

c) If after step (b) a risk to health and safety associated with digital work systems remains, the employer must reduce the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable, by the use of information, instruction or training.

d) An employer may only rely solely or primarily on the use of information, instruction or training to control a digital work systems risk if none of the measures set out in the above hierarchy, alone or in combination, is reasonably practicable.

## WHEN DIGITAL WORK SYSTEMS ARE IN USE, THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION:

**Employers' duties:** The employers' primary duty is to provide and maintain a working environment that is safe and without risks to health, so far as is reasonably practicable, including when introducing or using digital work systems. This includes identifying and eliminating or reducing risks associated with the use of digital work systems

Employers should conduct ongoing testing and monitoring of outcomes associated with the digital work system, and facilitate consultation before, during and after its implementation.

Employers remain responsible for outcomes caused by AI, surveillance and algorithmic management technology use and will not transfer accountability to technology providers or systems.

**Transparency and privacy:** The use, impacts and risks of any digital work systems in workplaces must be disclosed to all workers. This includes

- information and if necessary, training and instruction on all digital work systems that affect their work.
- how the systems operate; Their limitations and how to safely interact with them.
- Where and how workers can contest decisions made by automated systems.
- Any previous or ongoing harms, rights-violations or legal breaches associated with the system in other organisations.
- The results of any audits, testing or monitoring into the safety and rights impacts of the digital work system.

Workers and their representatives should have a right to access, review and contest any decision, data and information made or informed by digital work systems. All information and data collected or created by digital work systems must be stored securely. Data should only be collected to a degree that is proportionate for legitimate uses. Sensitive information and data must only be retained if it is vital to the function of the workplace.

**Discrimination and disciplinary use:** Digital work systems must not directly or indirectly discriminate or contribute to the discrimination of any worker on any protected or unprotected attribute. Employers must prevent any bias in digital work systems through regular auditing and testing. Where the risk of discrimination cannot be eliminated, automated systems should never be used to make decisions.

Digital work systems must not be used to make status-altering decisions including disciplinary action, promotions, performance management or termination decisions. Any information, automated decision, or data generated by any digital work system must be verified and assessed by a human decision-maker. Workers and their representatives must have the right to challenge and seek fair human review of any technology assisted decision-making process.

**Consultation:** Worker voice is a pivotal factor for the smooth and successful implementation of digital work systems. A lack of worker voice will cause employers to miss both significant risks and opportunities that can come from new technology implementation. Employers must consult with workers and, where applicable, health and safety representatives (HSRs) when identifying, assessing, and controlling risks related to all digital work systems.

Consultation should shape the employer's decision making and not rationalise it after decisions have already been made. Consultation must occur before digital work systems are introduced, when changes are made, and when risks are identified. It must involve sharing relevant information, providing a genuine opportunity for workers to express views, and taking those views into account in decision-making. Sharing concerns during consultation should never, under any circumstances, be used as a basis to take any kind of adverse action against a worker.