

OH&S risks in relation to the shearing board

Source: Victorian Workcover Authority

6.4 Shearing board

Hazard or risk	Risk control
The floor of the shearing board is an extremely high use area. It may become worn and grooved, increasing resistance to drag when handling sheep. Slippery boards increase the effort required by shearers to hold the sheep and maintain stability and increase the risk of back injury. Protruding nails and movement in floor boards increase strain on the shearer and the risk of catching.	The floor needs to be kept in good condition – even and level. Protruding nails should be countersunk before shearing commences and loose and slippery boards should be repaired or replaced.
Hard floor surfaces increase the risk of comb breakage and injury from handpiece lockup.	Softwood is the most common floor material used and is ideal for the job, provided it is in good condition. Combs are also less likely to be damaged if dropped on softwood boards.
Insufficient floor space increases the risk of collisions and interference with other shearers.	Ensure sufficient floor space for all workers to perform their tasks safely and properly. The shearer must be able to work without encroaching on the next shearer's workspace or route in and out of the catching pen. Sufficient workspace is required for the end stand, particularly when it is used by a left-handed shearer. Left-handed shearers should be able to face the rest of the shearers. Board space, the measured distance between downtubes, needs to be sufficient to accommodate the size of the sheep. The common board space of 5 ft (1525 mm) may be insufficient due to increases in the size and weight of sheep. A minimum dimension of 2000 mm is recommended for new and renovated sheds to provide a safer workstation. Greater distances may be required due to factors such as shed layout and sheep size.

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Hazard or risk	Risk control
Absence of a suitable fixing point above the board for a shearers back harness prevents use of the harness.	A secure fixing point, which is free to swivel and therefore remain above the harness throughout shearing, should be provided. It should be clear of the overhead shaft and within reach when standing on the floor. The harness and its mounting must be clear of any electrical wiring, leads or installation.