

SSLPR09 Leather Production Operator – Tanning

Disclaimer

These Occupational Frameworks and Skill Profiles have been developed as workforce planning, occupational mapping and skills reference resources for the Australian textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry. They are intended to describe the typical functions, responsibilities, skills and capabilities associated with occupations across the industry.

These documents are not intended to replace or override industrial instruments or employment arrangements, including awards, enterprise agreements, employment contracts, position descriptions, classification structures, licensing or regulatory requirements, or other statutory obligations. Where differences arise, the relevant industrial, legislative or regulatory requirements take precedence. The Skill Profiles should be used as complementary reference documents to support workforce planning, career development, training and skills recognition.

1. Job role

TCF sub-sector	Leather Production
Functional area	Leather Production
Job role	SSLPR09 Leather Production Operator - Tanning
Job role description	Responsible for converting prepared hides into stable leather through chrome or alternative tanning processes. Operates large tanning drums, controls chemical addition, monitors penetration and fixation stages, and ensures even tanning results. Requires strong mechanical control of rotating vessels and understanding of chemical interaction with hide fibres.
Performance expectations	- Achieve production targets without compromising leather quality. - Maintain correct machine settings and process parameters. - Operate machinery safely within WHS requirements. - Minimise defects, waste and rework. - Ensure consistent preparation for downstream processes.
Specialisation	May specialise in specific machinery or process stages.
Application in other TCF sectors	Transferable to textile dyeing operations, technical textile wet processing and industrial batch-processing environments involving rotating vessels.

2. Key tasks and critical work functions

Key tasks	- Load and unload hides into tanning drums following safe lock-out procedures. - Measure and charge tanning chemicals according to production sheets. - Monitor drum rotation, float ratios, pH and temperature throughout cycle. - Inspect leather for penetration and fixation consistency. - Clean drums and work areas between batches. - Coordinate batch completion with retanning stage.
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Critical work functions	• Safe operation of large rotating vessels. • Accurate chemical dosing and reaction control. • Monitoring and adjustment of process parameters. • Early detection of uneven tanning or mechanical faults. • Compliance with WHS and chemical safety standards.
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3. Technical skills

Tanning drum operation	Operate and monitor large tanning drums; control rotation speed, float ratios and cycle timing.
Chemical charging and handling	Measure and introduce tanning agents safely; monitor reaction stages.
Process control	Monitor pH, temperature and tanning duration to achieve consistent fibre stabilisation.
Mechanical inspection	Identify drum imbalance, leakage or mechanical faults.
Maintenance support	Assist with cleaning and routine drum inspection.

4. Generic Skills

Teamwork	Works effectively within production teams.
Communication	Reports faults, quality issues and safety risks clearly.
Problem solving	Responds to process or machinery irregularities.
Learning	Builds proficiency in machinery setup and process control.
Initiative	Supports yield improvement and waste reduction.
Service / customer orientation	Understands impact of role on final leather performance and customer requirements.

5. Emerging skills

Emerging skills	• Use of electronic work orders and digital batch instructions to confirm tanning specifications, chemical sequences and processing times. • Interaction with visual display units (VDUs) and touch-screen drum control panels to monitor rotation speed, float ratios, pH, temperature and cycle progression. • Operation of automated or semi-automated chemical dosing systems to improve accuracy and reduce manual handling risks. • Monitoring of in-drum pH and temperature sensors linked to automated process control systems. • Application of chrome-reduced, metal-free and environmentally sustainable tanning chemistries. • Increased understanding of water-reduction and energy-efficiency practices within tanning processes. • Greater traceability and documentation requirements linking tanning batches to export standards and downstream processing stages. • Adaptation to integrated production scheduling systems that coordinate tanning with beamhouse, retanning and finishing operations.
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6. VET Qualifications and Skill Sets

Entry-level preparation	No qualification.
Intermediate / trade-level development	No qualification.

7. Job progression

Possible job progression	Operator → Senior Operator → Team Leader → Production Supervisor.
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8. Classification

Australian Qualifications Framework	AQF Level 2.
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Skill Levels	Skill Level 4.
Open Source Classification of Occupations for Australia (OSCA)	731432 Textile or Footwear Production Machine Operator.



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