

WORKING ALONE, REMOTELY OR IN ISOLATION WORK POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to help manage workplace risks associated with working alone, remotely or in isolated work. It is intended that this policy will reduce the risk of injuries and incidents in the workplace for those working alone, remotely or in isolated areas.

This policy lists the responsibilities for managing the risks associated with remote or isolated work and provides guidelines for managing specific areas of communication and emergency response for such circumstances.

Scope

This policy covers all employees, managers and contractors of the organisation, especially those who work alone, remotely or in isolation.

Policy Statement

This organisation is committed to providing and maintaining safe systems of work for all its workers, including those who work alone, remotely or in isolation.

We recognise that working remotely or isolated work may give rise to specific risks which need to be managed appropriately. To ensure the health and safety of workers who work in these conditions we will consult affected workers and conduct risk assessments in line with our IMS System. We will aim to eliminate any exposure to risk from remote or isolated work and where such risks cannot be eliminated, we will put in place controls to minimise the risks.

Remote or isolated work may include various circumstances including working night shifts, working alone at home or separately from others. Such work may include those working alone permanently or only for periods of time.

Definitions

Remote or Isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Isolated work may involve a geographically isolated area, on or off site, either during or outside normal working hours. Remote work may involve work activities where there are few people and where communications and travel are difficult.

Lone workers - those workers who work by themselves and/or work with others with only limited support arrangements, which therefore expose them to risk by being isolated from the usual back-up support. This is the case whether they regularly work alone or are only occasionally alone and do not have access to immediate support from managers or other colleagues.

Example of remote, isolated or lone workers include those who:

- regularly travel for work
- work alone after normal working hours e.g. on night shift
- work separately from others, for example, in a regional office building
- work at home

Workplace – any place where work is carried out and includes any place where a worker goes or is likely to be, while at work

Procedures

Responsibilities

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Management of remote and isolated work is a shared responsibility between managers and employees.

All employees are required to:

- maintain regular contact and communications with their managers, if working from remote areas or in isolation
- maintain movement records, if travelling in or between remote areas
- make sure they receive adequate training, especially if they are working in isolation with specialist equipment
- comply with all the safe systems of work, including the information in this procedure
- ensure they are fit for duty to fulfil their work requirements;
- Provide feedback about emerging hazards and effectiveness of existing controls

Managers will ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of their team members, by:

- providing effective communication tools or devices for workers performing remote or isolated work
- being aware of the hazards and risks associated with remote and isolated work;
- providing safe systems of work, including developing shift work rosters, travel itineraries, emergency procedures and training in the use of emergency equipment
- providing and maintaining safe plant and structures
- providing adequate support facilities for the welfare at work of workers carrying out remote or isolated work
- providing advice, information, training, instruction or supervision that is necessary to protect all persons from risks to their health and safety, arising from remote or isolated work
- monitoring conditions at the workplace for the purpose of preventing illness or injury to workers
- Consulting workers when conducting risk assessments and planning effective risk controls.

Risk Management

Managers will adopt an ongoing risk management approach, in consultation with their employees, to identify hazards, assess risks and eliminate or minimise risks in relation to remote or isolated work. An annual risk assessment will be completed on each site as a minimum control, with additional assessments completed when appropriate in response to site changes or staff feedback about hazards that need to be investigated and jointly addressed with the asset owner. At least the following hazards associated with remote or isolated work will be considered:

- Exposure to violence
- Poor access to emergency assistance
- Increased severity of workplace injuries in case of an incident if they are working alone rather than with colleagues who can help
- Mentally or emotionally demanding work with little support from colleagues or managers

- Fatigue due to travel, night shift or rostering
- Physical work environment in a remote location e.g. availability of water, food, power, communications, attack by animals, heat stress
- Psychological risks of work stress linked to working alone and in isolation from others
- Work environment when working at home.

The following questions will be considered when assessing the risks:

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- How long a worker needs to work alone, in remote or isolated circumstances
- What access a worker has to effective communications with their manager and others
- Whether emergency communications will function properly at all times
- Where the worker needs to be located, keeping in mind whether emergency services can quickly and easily reach a worker, if needed
- What sort of work is being done e.g. the potential for fatigue
- What skills, abilities and experience the workers have, including the level of training they have been provided e.g. first aid in remote situations
- What if any pre-existing medical conditions the workers may have.

Managers will put in place appropriate risk controls to reduce or eliminate risks associated with remote or isolated work, in consultation with the employees. These include the following:

- Arranging appropriate safe systems of work with the asset owner
- Designing workplaces to reduce the likelihood of violence, including:
 - installing effective barriers
 - layout of client consultation rooms
 - increased visibility
 - monitored CCTV cameras.
- Implementing movement records to know where workers are expected to be
- Establishing contact procedures for when workers arrive at their work destinations in remote areas, including agreed emergency procedures to be activated if contact is not made within agreed timeframes
- Maintaining regular contact times between the worker and their manager or colleagues
- Making sure that communication tools work at all times
- Providing appropriate training e.g. to deal with potentially violent clients or in first aid.
- Sharing knowledge with workers or at industry level about potential risks
- Developing safe work method statements (SWMS) for remote or isolated work
- Ensuring that workers are not fatigued, by providing ample rest breaks and recovery time, when they are travelling long distances, especially to remote work locations
- Ensuring worker have considered and prepared sufficient quantities of water and food to sustain proper hydration and sustenance, appropriate to the remote or isolated location and work being planned
- Ensuring spaces used at home for work are ergonomically assessed.

Managers will follow up and review the effectiveness of the implemented risk controls.

Communication

Communication will be considered for all the remote or isolated work, ensuring that the following principles apply:

- All workers will have adequate access to communication in cases of emergency
- Mobile coverage in the work area and access to power for recharging telephone batteries will be considered when planning work in remote areas

- Where access to mobile networks is inadequate other forms of communication will be considered, such as radio, satellite or personal security systems
- Regular systems for communication and monitoring of workers' movements will be set up and maintained

Emergency Plans

Workers will have access to site emergency planning details within the Cleaners Manual or the Emergency plan for 36 Belladonia Gum Circuit. The following principles will apply for emergency arrangements for remote or isolated workers:

- Comply with Safe Work Method Statement
- They will have access to first aid equipment and facilities at all times
- Where first aid kits are provided to workers, they will be trained in using the kit
- The need for first aid training in remote situations will be considered
- Emergency procedures will be established and appropriate training provided to ensure that all workers are aware of the procedures

Travel

The following principles will apply for travel arrangements:

- Comply with the Safe Work Method Statement
- Ensure workers are aware of and comply with the fatigue management policy, especially relating to long distance travel
- Ensure that the vehicle is equipped with appropriate emergency equipment
- Consider possible public transport or taxi alternatives

Working alone in the office

All workers working alone in the office will follow the following arrangements:

- Comply with the Safe Work Method statement
- Check that the external doors are locked at all times
- Not allow anyone unauthorised to enter the home
- Communicate with the manager or the nominated person at the beginning of the shift, every four hours during the shift and at its completion, either by SMS or telephone
- Check that they are aware of emergency procedures including exit routes.

Related Policy Documents and References

- Integrated Management System Policy
- Integrated Management System Manual
- Cleaners Manual
- General Cleaning Safe Work Method Statement
- Incident management procedure
- Fatigue Management Policy
- 36 Belladonia Gum Circuit Emergency Plan

A breach of this policy & procedure may have unintended and harmful consequences. Breaches of this policy & procedure may lead to disciplinary action being taken, including dismissal in serious cases.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually. All employees will receive communication about the requirements of this policy and any changes arising from the reviews.
