

## Remote and isolated work

### Description

The department has a legislative obligation to manage the risks associated with remote and/or isolated work. 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 undertaken. Workers may be isolated even if other workers are nearby in another building or paddock.

### Key Points

Workers should not work alone when working:

- in confined spaces
- where there is a risk of violence
- in laboratories where chemical substances are handled or housed
- in areas where power and/or hand held tools are used
- at heights
- any other place or situation where there is a significant risk of injury from the work being carried out which cannot be effectively controlled

Managers/supervisors must have formal arrangements in place to manage the risks associated with workers undertaking activities in remote and isolated areas. Unless other agreed arrangements are in place, workers must complete the remote and isolated work checklist prior to commencement of the remote and isolated activity.

Managers/supervisors must manage the risk of remote and isolated work by:

- Eliminating where reasonably practicable the need to work in remote and/or isolated locations.
- If remote/isolated work is necessary determining the level of supervision required.
- Ensuring effective communication with the worker who is carrying out the remote and/or isolated work.
- Proactively identifying, assessing, controlling and monitoring the tasks undertaken at the remote and isolated work environment.
- Ensuring workers are competent in the use of emergency equipment and processes including first aid, use of fire extinguishers, use of satellite phone and other communication devices.
- Ensuring other items such as adequate drinking water, insect repellent, food and clothing are available in the event of a breakdown or being stranded at a location.

If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the need to work at remote and isolated locations, then the following control measures should be considered.

- *Buddy system* - some activities present such a high level of risk that workers should not work alone, e.g. risk of violence or work in confined spaces.
- *Communication systems* – if a worker is working alone in a workplace that has a telephone which can be accessed in an emergency then communication via the telephone is adequate.

In situations where a telephone is not available a method of communication should be chosen that will allow the worker to call for help in the event of an emergency. Examples include personal security systems; radio communication systems; satellite communications systems; distress beacons.

Mobile phones cannot be relied upon as an effective means of communication in many locations. Consult the provider if there is any doubt about the capability of a particular phone to sustain a signal for the entire period the worker is working remotely.

- *Training, information and instruction* – training should be provided to prepare workers for working alone and/or in remote locations. Examples of training include dealing with aggressive clients, using communication systems, driving off-road vehicles.

- *Plant & Equipment* – all equipment must be suitable for the purpose and inspected/tested prior to the trip. Workers must hold appropriate licences and be trained in the use of the equipment.
- *Transport* – vehicles must be fit for purpose and workers must adhere to critical risk controls for driving, fatigue and remote and isolated work.