



## Working Alone or in Isolation

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### **Purpose**

This procedure outlines the University's requirements and practices for the management of staff, students, volunteers and contractors who are required to work in isolated circumstances where they may be exposed to risks because the nature, time, location of the work or remoteness from other persons or support services.

NOTE: Field trips or work in remote locations away from the University should form part of the Fieldwork Health and Safety procedure.

### **Legislative requirements**

Part 2, Division 14 of Occupational Health Safety and Welfare regulations 2010 requires communication to be made on a regular basis with people who work alone for the purposes of ensuring their health, safety and welfare.

It is a requirement that there is an adequate and reliable system for ensuring regular communication with the person.

### **Definition**

Working alone (remote or isolated work) refers to situations where a person may be exposed to risks because:

- the area they are working in is remote from others or isolated from the assistance of others because the nature, time or location of their work
- the work involves the operation or maintenance of hazardous plant, or the handling of a hazardous substance
- the work is dangerous for a person to perform alone.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Line Managers/Supervisors are responsible for:

- approval of personnel to undertake work alone or in isolation in their workplace
- ensuring all work that is performed alone or in isolation has a risk assessment performed and adequate control measures implemented prior to approval of work
- ensuring appropriate arrangements for personnel and, if necessary, contractors involved in working alone
- consulting with staff, students and visitors that work alone
- providing appropriate training for staff, students and visitors that work alone.

Employees, Students, Volunteers, Contractors and Visitors are responsible for:

- not placing themselves at risk when working alone



- consulting with the line manager/supervisor in relation to developing appropriate measures to control risk associated with working alone.

### Procedure

All workplaces shall identify all work processes which require staff, students and visitors to work alone and where they would be unable to readily summon assistance in the event of injury, illness, violence or other emergency. This may include working alone out of normal working and class hours.

The following should be implemented prior to undertaking work alone or in isolation

- Conduct a risk assessment
- Implement control measures by:
- Identifying a contact person
- Identifying the frequency and method of contact required
- preparing any Safe Operating Procedures (SOP's) required
- Obtain an authority to perform work alone or in isolation.

#### 1. Low risk working alone

Where employees, students, contractors, volunteers and visitors are undertaking office/computer based work or work having been assessed as low risk, the following must be undertaken:

- Persons working back or coming in after normal working and class hours should always advise Security that they are on Campus and again when they are leaving. When off-campus a supervisor or alternate contact person should be notified of the work commencement and expected completion
- Undertake all personal security measures, eg lock doors, walk in well lit areas, request a security personal escort as required.
- If the working alone time is going to be greater than 3 hours arrange times to phone a contact person to confirm personal safety.

#### 2. Where presence of others is required

Some work may require another person/s to be present on the floor or in the building. Before this category of work is approved, arrangements are to be made for another authorised person to be present within the workplace for the period of time that the work is to be undertaken.

Examples of activities in this category may include the use of:

- x- rays and isotopes
- exposed, energised electrical or electronic systems
- large volumes of flammable solvents.
- Schedule 4, 8 or 9 poisons.
- radioactive sources.
- research projects which include substances or materials hazardous to health

Some work is classified as too hazardous to be undertaken in isolation and should be undertaken during normal working hours or when qualified assistance and supervision is available.

Examples of work in this category may include:

- use of hazardous substances where there is a significant risk of injury or exposure to the hazardous substances being used
- disposal of hazardous substances
- use of naked flames associated with flammable solvents
- extreme temperature environments, e.g. cool rooms
- at heights or in confined spaces
- in areas where power tools or hand tools (inc welding) that could cause injury are used
- areas where moving machinery is used
- or any task assessed as high risk.
- any persons found without an appropriate authority from the line manager/supervisor may be asked to vacate the area by an authorised staff member or Security.



### 3. Risk Assessment

An assessment of the risks associated with each working alone situation shall be completed in consultation with staff or their representatives or relevant personnel using form [OHSW2](#) – General Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment to identify potential and existing deficiencies and to formulate practical solutions to manage working alone situations. This may include:

- accessing or leaving the site
- emergency procedures which may be required and the availability of those resources if outside normal working hours
- the level of supervision required
- possible consequences of unattended substances, equipment or experiments in the area
- level of training of the person involved
- security of the area
- the means of communication in the area.
- In addition, disclosure and consideration of any medical conditions that may give rise to a dangerous or life threatening situation when working alone must be taken into account.

### 4. Monitoring and Communication

Formal arrangements are to be made and implemented to ensure communication is maintained. The extent of these arrangements will be dependant on the type of work undertaken and the outcomes of the risk assessment. A contact person shall be nominated and arrangements agreed and entered into for two way communication. The method and intervals are to be included. The amount of contact required whilst working alone depends on the hazard potential of the work and the experience of the individual undertaking the work.

### 5. Safe Operating Procedures

Safe Operating procedures may need to be developed for the circumstances involving working alone and shall include consideration of:

- the procedure for security
- the system for communication
- communication equipment
- the procedure for response to an incident
- any special training required
- requirements of other OHSW procedures.

### 6. Authorisation

Except in the case of Section 1 above, when it is a requirement to advise Security, authorisation to work alone or in isolation must be obtained prior to commencement of work. This should be signed by the supervisor/line manager or other person authorized by the supervisor or line manager. An exchange of emails will suffice but records must be retained. Alternatively form [OHSW47](#) – Authorisation for Work Alone or in Isolation may be used.

The authorisation will specify:

1. duration of the approval
2. areas that can be accessed/used
3. procedures, equipment and tasks that can be undertaken
4. assessment of competency for activity
5. a copy of the risk assessment including controls to be used.

For work which is undertaken on a regular basis the same risk assessment can be utilized while the conditions remain current as documented on the risk assessment and providing it takes into account all conditions likely to be experienced during the period of approval.

The line manager/supervisor must determine that the worker undertaking the work alone or in isolation is competent to undertake the work. The supervisor shall document the assessment of competency on the authorization. Any person must have completed



appropriate induction training, including emergency evacuation and other necessary emergency procedures prior to approval being given for working alone or in isolation.

**7. Training**

Staff, students, contractors, volunteers and visitors shall be provided with sufficient training to undertake relevant tasks safely, when working in isolated situations. The outcomes of the training are to be documented and included in relevant training records.

**8. After hours emergency**

In the event of an emergency occurring please refer to [emergency management](#) however first point of contact should be Security  
City West 20 000 or 88 888  
City East 22 222 or 88 888  
Mawson Lakes 23 333 or 88 888  
Magill 24 444 or 88 888  
Whyalla 26 050

If the situation is assessed as being life threatening or immediate assistance is not available from Security, emergency services can be contacted on 000 (0000 if using an internal phone)

**Further Assistance**

Further advice is available regarding OHSW working alone activities from OHSW&IM Services in the Human Resources Unit.

**Documents/Forms**

[OHSW2](#) – General Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

[OHSW47](#) – Authorisation for Work Alone or in Isolation

**References**

University OHSW Procedure – [Contractor Management](#)

University OHSW Procedure – [Critical Incident Management](#)

University OHSW Procedure – [Fieldwork Health and Safety](#)

University OHSW Procedure – [Hazard Management](#)

University OHSW Procedure – [Incident Reporting and Investigation](#)

University OHSW Procedure – [Training Needs & Planning](#)

[University OHSW&IM Policy](#)

[University OHSW Strategic Plan 2009 - 2011 \(PDF 158kb\)](#)

[University Injury Management Strategic Plan 2009 - 2011 \(PDF 85kb\)](#)

[OHSW & Injury Management System \(PDF 128kb\)](#)

Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare Act, 1986

Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare Regulations, 2010