Remote & Isolated Work Procedure (17)

Contents

1. PURPOSE

To provide guidance and raise awareness of the potential hazards that may be present for workers required to work alone or in a remote or isolated environment.

2. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all workers under the Catholic Church Endowment Society Inc. (CCES).

3. DEFINITIONS

Definitions can be found on the [Catholic Safety & Injury Management Website](#).

3.1. Information

- isolated work may involve work activities undertaken in an isolated area (geographical isolation), on or off site, either during or outside normal working hours (temporal isolation).
- remote work may involve work activities undertaken at a location removed from an office environment where there are few people and where communication and travel are difficult.
- a worker may be considered remote or isolated even if other people may be close by. In some situations, a worker may be alone for a short period of time, while in other situations they may be on their own for days or weeks in a remote location.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

Specific responsibilities for carrying out certain actions required by the CCES, have been allocated to position holders within the organisation. Such responsibilities are consistent with the obligations that the legislation places on officers, managers, supervisors, workers, and others in the workplace.

Responsibility, authority, and accountability processes have been defined in [Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Procedure (12)](#), and summarised in:

- [Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Workers (025G)](#);
- [Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Managers & Supervisors (023G)](#);
- [Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Officers (024G)](#); and
- [Work Health & Safety and Injury Management Policy](#).

You are required to familiarise yourself with this procedure to understand the obligations that you may have in relation to its implementation and to carry out your assigned actions and responsibilities.

This Procedure is to be read in conjunction with your Organisational Policies and / or Procedures.

5. PROCEDURE

Workers may work remotely or in isolation if they:

- physically work alone.
- work separately from others, (e.g., in a regional office building).
- work at home or engage in teleworking activities.
- work outside normal working hours, (e.g., on call workers).
- work shift work or night work.
- travel as part of work.
- travel long distances, (e.g., rural locations).
- work unsupervised.
- work in a restricted space.
- work in geographical isolation, (e.g., health and community workers).
- work on a reduced roster, (e.g., on public holidays).

The following factors should be considered when assessing the risks:

Length of time the person may be working alone	• How long would the person need to be alone to finish the job?
Time of day when the person may be working alone	• Is there increased risk at certain times of day? (e.g., a cleaner working alone late at night may be at greater risk of exposure to violence).
Communication	• What forms for communication does the worker have access to? • Are there procedures for regular contact with the worker? • Will the emergency communication system work properly in all situations? • If communication systems are vehicle-based, what arrangements are there to cover the worker when they are away from the vehicle?
Location of the work	• Is the work in a remote location that makes immediate rescue or attendance of emergency services difficult? • What is likely to happen if there is a vehicle breakdown?
Nature of the work	• What machinery, tools and equipment may be used? • Are high risk activities involved? (e.g., work at heights, working with electricity, hazardous chemicals, or hazardous plant). • Is fatigue likely to increase risk (e.g., with long hours driving a vehicle or operating machinery)? • Is there an increased risk of violence or aggression when workers deal with clients or customers by themselves?

	• Can environmental factors affect the safety of the worker? (e.g., exposure to extreme hot or cold environments?) • Is there risk of attack by an animal?
Skills and capability of the worker	• What is the worker's level of work experience and training? • Is the worker able to make sound judgements about their safety? • Is there any pre-existing medical condition that may increase risk?

5.1. Risk Assessment

The potential risk of any serious injury from existing hazards is increased in these unique working environments and requires additional precautions to be taken. A major danger for remote or isolated workers is sustaining an injury that precludes self-rescue, where assistance from other people may be limited. Each work activity or situation proposed for a worker to undertake should be considered in terms of associated risk factors to determine the degree of exposure and level of potential harm involved.

The following factors also need to be considered.

5.1.1. Work Environment

The work environment encompasses many aspects including the location, the nature of the work, the design and layout of the workplace, as well as environmental conditions, plant, and animal activity.

5.1.2. Workplace layout and design

Workplaces and their surrounds can be designed to support the flow of work. (e.g., workplaces can have a specific entrance and exit, barriers and fences that prevent access to dangerous areas, and a reduced likelihood of violence through physical barriers, monitored CCTV and enhanced visibility).

5.1.3. Accommodation

If working in regional and remote areas, accommodation may need to be provided while the work is being carried out. Accommodation should:

• be lockable, with safe entry and exit.
• meet all relevant structural and stability requirements.
• meet electrical and fire safety standards.
• have all electrical devices tested and tagged?
• have a supply of drinking water.
• have appropriate toilets, washing and laundry facilities.
• be regularly cleaned and have rubbish collected.

5.1.4. Communication Systems

If a worker is working alone in a workplace, communication via the telephone may be adequate, provided the worker is able to reach the telephone in an emergency. In situations where a telephone is not available, a method of communication that will allow a worker to call for help in the event of an emergency at any time should be chosen. Good practice for managing remote workers includes having a schedule of regular phone calls from the worker to someone who is able to raise an alarm if the worker fails to phone in. A procedure or work instruction on frequency of calls, the number to call, and the action to be taken if the call is not received, should be developed, and provided to all relevant workers. This could also include family members as a point of contact, other organisations in the area, and community leaders if they are equally able to raise the alarm. Procedures developed should be tested regularly to ensure they work.

In situations where a telephone is not available, the following methods of communication may be used to allow a worker to call for help in the event of an emergency:

- Personal Security Systems - these are wireless and portable so are suitable for people moving around or checking otherwise deserted workplaces. Ideally, personal security systems with a non-movement sensor should be used to automatically activate an alarm if there has not been movement within a certain time.
- Radio Communication Systems - enables communication between two mobile users in different vehicles or from a mobile vehicle and a fixed station. These systems are dependent on frequency, power, and distance from or between broadcasters.
- Satellite Communication Systems - enables communication with workers in geographically remote locations. Their operation can be affected by damage to aerials, failure of vehicle power supplies, or vehicle damage.
- Distress Beacons - these should be provided where life-threatening emergencies may occur to pinpoint location and to indicate by activation of the beacon that an emergency exists.
- Mobile Phones - mobile phones cannot be relied upon as an effective means of communication in many locations. Coverage in the area where the worker will work should be confirmed before work commences. It is important that batteries are kept charged and a spare is available if required.
- Movement Records – call-in systems with managers / supervisors or colleagues can assist in knowing where workers are expected to be. Satellite tracking systems or devices may also have message sending capability as well as distress or alert functions.

5.1.5. First aid

Remote or isolated workers always need ready access to first aid equipment and / or facilities.

Where first aid kits are provided to individuals or made available, the worker should be trained in using the kit provided (e.g., churches, vehicles).

5.1.6. Emergency procedures

Emergency procedures, including in the event of serious or imminent danger, should be established and workers trained in the use of emergency equipment. Information about emergency procedures and danger areas should be provided to remote or isolated workers.

Outside normal hours of work (typically in the evenings and at weekends) access and egress routes may be limited for security reasons and mechanisms for opening / closing doors may vary. PCBUs should ensure that workers working outside normal hours are aware of emergency exit routes and that adequate emergency assistance is available if needed.

5.2. Risk Management

All worksites are expected to have risk control processes in place. This will include established systems and documented procedures specific to their worksite needs. Risk Assessment (004F) or equivalent are to be documented and should be updated as necessary at the discretion of the worker in consultation with the manager / supervisor.

Remote or isolated workers must be made aware of the risks associated with their work, and controls should clearly define the limits of work that can be carried out while working alone. When assessing risks, workers, and as relevant their manager in consultation with workers, need to consider how likely the risk of harm is and how severe the outcome may be.

5.2.1. Control Measures:

One or more of these control strategies may be used to address the identified risks:

- Buddy System – tasks can present a high level of risk that workers should not work alone, (e.g., jobs where there is a risk of violence or where work is carried out in restricted spaces).
- Workplace Layout and Design – workplaces and their surrounds can be designed to reduce the likelihood of violence, (e.g., by installing physical barriers, monitored CCTV, and enhancing visibility through lighting).
- Communication Systems – refer to 5.1.4. Communication Systems.

5.3. Community Work - Client responsibilities

As the client's home is a workplace, clients must provide, as far as is reasonable, a safe working environment for workers coming into their home.

Clients may be asked to:

- secure their pets to avoid harm to the worker.
- allow reasonable modifications to be made to ensure the safety of all workers (e.g., move mats which may cause a fall).
- leave a light on for the after dark visits.
- not smoke while the worker is present.
- provide appropriate and safe equipment (if required).
- treat workers with courtesy and respect (non-abusive and non-threatening).

5.3.1. Community Workers

Community workers at times find themselves alone in situations where their access to support / help is limited. Managers / supervisors are to maintain effective communication with workers who work alone and / or in remote areas.

When assessing the risks to workers, managers / supervisors need to consider how likely the threat is and how severe the outcome may be. The worksite and the workers should consider the following:

- location of the workplace (is it isolated geographically?)
- if the worker had an incident, what is the likelihood of the client or their family being able to contact help on the worker's behalf?
- are workers working alone?
- is work carried out after dark?
- distances travelled, road surfaces and condition.
- distances from help (where workers are in isolated areas).
- any neighbourhood security hazards.
- mobile phone coverage.

Where the potential for a problem is identified, solutions must aim to eliminate or reduce the risk. In most situations, planning and technology will assist this.

Possible solutions may include:

- relocating the service to another location.
- use two workers rather than one.
- notifying relevant authorities (e.g., SAPOL, parks and wildlife)
- mobile phones or other electronic methods to obtain assistance, with emergency numbers keyed into speed dial.
- monitoring the location of workers (e.g., workers to ring a central point within half an hour of the last job - not always possible).
- obtaining permission from the client to use their telephone for work-related calls.
- ensuring workers carry ID badges specifying the organisation they work for.
- ensuring workers have reliable vehicles, particularly for work at night and roadside assistance coverage.

- procedures and training for workers in reporting and recording incidents.
- mapping emergency coordinates of remote properties / houses.
- mapping areas where there is generally no mobile phone coverage and developing communication systems for these areas.
- ensuring that a worker's family and friends have the relevant office contact details and can advise the workplace if the worker does not arrive home at their usual time.
- providing the manager / supervisor with work time and location details to assist tracking workers who do not arrive home on time.

5.3.2. Controls

Safe working tips for workers include:

- ensure pre-visit assessment and all other relevant information has been obtained.
- if there is any suspicion of risk, arrange with your Manager / Supervisor to have another worker accompany you.
- obtain a list of emergency numbers and key the emergency number 000 or 112 into the quick-dial section of your mobile phone.
- check that you have the correct location details for the client, a street directory and a first aid kit in your vehicle.
- ensure you have any appropriate safety equipment with you including gloves, mask, antiseptic gels, torch, and batteries (if lighting is poor or after dark).
- ensure your whereabouts are communicated to your manager / supervisor and to your family if appropriate (e.g., visiting client on the way home).
- utilise any previous knowledge you, or other workers, have about the client, relatives, carers, visitors, neighbours etc.
- dress appropriately (e.g., business-like, non-provocative).
- listen for conflict prior to entry.
- respect that you are entering another person's environment.
- stand back and to the side of the door after knocking.
- keep mobile phone and keys on your person (e.g., on a key ring on your belt).
- know where the exit doors are and keep them clear and unlocked.
- park vehicle in a safe, well-lit area with easy egress (not in the driveway).
- be aware of how your interpersonal skills may affect the situation.
- be aware of your own limitations (e.g., response to conflict, values, commitment to safety vs risk taking).
- have a good understanding of emergency procedures (including vehicle break downs, carjacking, road rage).
- be willing to participate in post-incident debriefing / counselling / worker assistance programmes.
- advise clients of expected time of arrival and ask them to restrain pets away from the visit area.

- never assume the environment is 100% safe or the client 100% safe.
- always be prepared for the unexpected.

5.4. Training

Workers must be provided with training to prepare them for working alone and / or in remote locations. This includes training in dealing with potentially aggressive customers or clients, using communication systems, administering first aid, obtaining emergency assistance when driving or travelling.

5.5. Records

Documents used to manage hazardous manual tasks as prescribed by this procedure will be produced in a format that allows tracking for verification and review and be in accordance with requirements detailed in Document Control Procedure (23).

5.6. Review

This procedure will be subject to a planned review by the document owner in accordance with the requirements outline in Document Control Procedure (23).

Other methods for reviewing and evaluating the performance of this procedure will include:

- audit activity.
- incident investigations.
- review of risk assessments.
- performance reports.
- analysis of injury and claim trends.

6. RELATED SYSTEM DOCUMENTS

6.1. Policies & Procedures

Incident Reporting & Investigation Procedure (2)

Consultation & Communication Procedure (5)

Audit Procedure (7)

Driver Safety Procedure (8)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Procedure (12)

Induction & Training Procedure (13)

Hazard Management Procedure (14)

Challenging Behaviour, Aggression & Violence Procedure (18)

Document Control Procedure (23)

6.2. Forms & Tools

Remote Isolated Work Process Flowchart (035T)

Risk Assessment Form (004F)

7. REFERENCES

Legislation and other requirements related to this procedure are defined in [Group Legal Register (010T)](#) which can be accessed via the Catholic Safety & Injury Management Website.

7.1. Internal Resources

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Managers & Supervisors (023G)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Officers (024G)

Responsibility, Authority & Accountability Matrix – Workers (025G)

7.2. External Resources

SafeWork SA Community Workers - Work Health & Safety Guidelines

8. AUDITABLE OUTPUTS

The following examples of records will be used to verify implementation of this procedure:

- Meetings / Toolbox Meetings
- Risk assessments
- Home Visit Checklists
- Inductions & Training Records

9. VERSION CONTROL & CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Approved by	Approved Date	Reason for Development of Review	Next Review Date
V6	Sector Forums	February 2014	Legislation – New WHS Act & Regulations 2012	2017
April 2015 – Document consolidated across CCES sectors				
V1	Executive Manager CSHWSA	24/04/2015	Procedure Consolidation	2017
V2	Executive Manager CSHWSA	18/09/17	Procedure Review	2020
V3	Executive Manager CSHWSA	22/01/2021	Reviewed content, Reformatted template.	2023
V4	Executive Manager CSaIM	01/12/2023	Added Remote & Isolate Work Process Flowchart (035T) to section 6.2.	2026

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