

### Working Alone or in Isolation

1. Purpose
2. Legislative requirements
3. Definition
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Procedure
  - 5.1 Low risk working alone
  - 5.2 Where presence of others is recommended
  - 5.3 Risk Assessment
  - 5.4 Monitoring and Communication
  - 5.5 Safe Operating Procedures
  - 5.6 Authorisation
  - 5.7 Training
  - 5.8 After hours emergency
  - 5.9 SafeZone smartphone app
6. Documents/Forms
7. References

#### 1. 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 of the nature, time and 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.

#### 2. Legislative requirements

Chapter 3, Part 2, Division 6 of the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA) requires effective communication to be maintained with people who work alone or remotely for the purposes of ensuring their health and safety.

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

#### 3. 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 of 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.

**Assistance:** includes rescue, medical assistance and the attendance of emergency service workers.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

**Executive Deans, Directors and General Managers are responsible for:**

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

### **Employees, Students, Volunteers and Contractors are responsible for:**

- contributing to the development of appropriate measures to control risk associated with working alone
- not placing themselves at risk when working alone.

### **5. Procedure**

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

The following risk management approach should be implemented in consultation with the persons involved and the Health and Safety Representative (where applicable) prior to undertaking work alone or in isolation.

- Identify potential hazards associated with the work
- Eliminate risks to health and safety so far as is reasonably practicable
- If unable to eliminate risks, conduct a risk assessment to determine the control measures required to minimise the risks
- Implement control measures that consider:
  - identifying and designating a contact person/s
  - identifying the frequency and method of contact required
  - arrangements for rescue, medical and emergency assistance
  - preparing any Safe Operating Procedures (SOP's) required
  - obtaining an authority to perform work alone or in isolation.
- Periodically evaluate control measures to ensure they remain effective.
- Review and improve control measures where results indicate the existing control measures do not control the risk.

#### **5.1 Low risk working alone**

For office/computer-based work or work having been assessed as low risk, the following must be undertaken:

- persons working back or coming in outside of 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 times.
- all personal security measures, e.g. 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.

#### **5.2 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 high-powered lasers
- 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.

## WHS PROCEDURE

Examples of work in this category may include:

- use and disposal of hazardous substances where there is a significant risk of injury or exposure
- use of naked flames associated with flammable solvents
- extreme temperature environments, e.g. cool rooms
- working at heights or in confined spaces
- areas where power tools or hand tools (inc welding) that could cause injury are used
- areas where moving machinery is used
- any task assessed as high risk

Any person/s found without an appropriate authority from their manager may be asked to vacate the area by an authorised staff member or Security.

### 5.3 Risk Assessment

An assessment of the risks associated with each working alone/remote situation shall be completed in consultation with staff or their representatives, the HSR (where applicable) or other relevant personnel. Form WHS2 – General Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment is to be used to identify potential and/or existing deficiencies and to formulate practical solutions to manage working alone/remote situations. This may include but is not limited to:

- accessing or leaving the site
- medical and emergency assistance 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.
- disclosure and consideration of any pre-existing medical conditions that may give rise to a dangerous or life-threatening situation when working alone.

### 5.4 Monitoring and Communication

Formal arrangements shall be made and implemented to ensure communication is maintained. The extent of these arrangements will be dependent on the type of work undertaken and the outcomes of the risk assessment. A dedicated 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/remotely depends on the potential risk and the experience of the individual undertaking the work.

### 5.5 Safe Operating Procedures

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

- the procedure for security
- the system for communication
- communication equipment
- the procedure for response to an incident (including reporting the details in the online Hazard/Incident Reporting & Investigation system)
- any special training required
- requirements of other WHS procedures.

### 5.6 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 must be signed by the appropriate manager or other person authorised by the manager. An exchange of emails will suffice but records must be retained. Alternatively form WHS47 – Authorisation for Work Alone or in Isolation should be used.

The authorisation will specify:

1. duration of the approval
2. place of work
3. areas that can be accessed/used

## WHS PROCEDURE

4. a description of processes, equipment and tasks that can be undertaken
5. assessment of competency for activity
6. 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 utilised 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 systems provided for communication and equipment used shall be maintained to ensure reliability and effectiveness should an emergency occur.

### 5.7 Training

The manager must determine that the worker undertaking the work alone/remotely is competent to undertake the work and record the assessment of competency on the authorisation. Any person must have completed appropriate induction training, including emergency evacuation and other necessary emergency procedures prior to approval being given. Records of training must be maintained.

### 5.8 After hours emergency

In the event of an emergency occurring, campus security should be contacted on **88888** (from internal phone) for all campuses **OR 1800 500 911** (24-hours, free call). Please refer to the university emergency management procedures for further information.

If the situation is assessed as being life threatening or immediate assistance is not available from Security, Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) should be contacted on 000 ('0' 000 if using an internal phone). In non-emergency situations you can also contact the Police on 131 444.

### 5.9 SafeZone smartphone app

SafeZone is a free App which connects you to University of South Australia Security team if you need any help while you are on campus.

The SafeZone service is specific to SafeZone Areas that have been defined by your campus security team. While you are within one of the defined areas, the security team will be responding to your alarm or call. In Australia, if you use SafeZone outside the defined areas, the app will direct you to call 000, Australian emergency call centre. For more information see the SafeZone link below.

## 6. Documents/Forms

Further advice on managing risks in university workplaces, including supporting documents and training courses are available on the [Safety & Wellbeing website](#).

- WHS Procedure – Fieldwork Health and Safety
- WHS Procedure – Managing Health and Safety Risks
- WHS Procedure – Critical Incident Management
- WHS Procedure – Incident Reporting and Investigation
- WHS Procedure – Contractor Management
- WHS Procedure – Induction and Training
- WHS02 – General Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
- WHS47 – Authorisation for Work Alone or in Isolation
- [University Emergency Management](#)
- [SafeZone \(FMU Security\)](#)

## 7. References

- [Work Health and Safety Act & Regulations 2012 \(SA\)](#)