Lone or Remote Worker

Introduction

Term

Definition

Black Spot

No radio or mobile phone communication in the area

Remote location

An employee is deemed to be working alone or in a remote location in the following circumstances:

Working alone / Lone worker

A person is working alone when:

Purpose

Scope

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Managers

Responsibility of Team Co-ordinators/Supervisors

Responsibility of Employees

Assessment and Control of Risks associated with lone or remote work

Annexure 1: Emergency procedures

Annexure 2: Lone Worker Risk Assessment - Example Questions
Introduction

Bega Valley Shire Council (BVSC) has responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of all workers. This duty extends to those staff who perform remote or isolated work. Lone and remote workers may be exposed to hazards such as violence and aggression (including physical and verbal abuse) and difficult work environments and may be at greater risk of harm in the event of an emergency or if involved in a work related accident. It is the responsibility of all managers, coordinators and staff to understand the inherent risks of working alone or in remote locations and to develop solutions to decrease or eliminate these risks.

Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black Spot</td>
<td>No radio or mobile phone communication in the area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote location</td>
<td>An employee is deemed to be working alone or in a remote location in the following circumstances:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• If there is no two way radio communication; and or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Has no access to telecommunications; and or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Where the employee is not in contact with a second person</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Where the employee may be working with unpredictable or agitated clients.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working alone / Lone worker</td>
<td>A person is working alone when:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• They are on their own</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When they cannot be seen or heard by another person</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When they cannot expect a visit from another worker or member of the public for some time (60 minutes)</td>
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</table>
Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide instructions for managing the risks to health and safety for managers, supervisors, designated personnel and staff working alone or in remote locations.

Scope

This procedure applies to all Bega valley Shire Council employees who work alone or in remote locations. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Employees in fixed establishments
- One person on the premises
- Working separately from others
- Working outside core hours
- Employees working away from their fixed base
- On remote field construction sites
- Remote, isolated areas such as bushland
- Geographical areas with poor or no communication coverage

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of Managers

Managers have responsibility to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all their workers. Managers must:

- Ensure relevant information, instruction and training is provided to employees working alone or in remote locations.
- Formally review the assessment of the risks to health and safety as they relate to lone or remote work for their workers and ensure all workers are able to identify and control those risks.
- Consult with staff about working alone and/or working in remote areas.

Responsibility of Team Co-ordinators/Supervisors

Before allowing employees to proceed to work alone or in remote areas the activity being performed must be assessed by both the employee(s) and supervisor to identify any foreseeable risks, and to put in place suitable control measures to provide for the safe execution of the work.

Team coordinators / supervisors/ must:

- Complete a risk assessment for work activities using the ‘Working Alone Inspection Checklist’ (Appendix A) as a guide.
- Provide relevant information, instruction and training to employees working alone or in remote locations
- Ensure lone workers have appropriate training, e.g. first aid, emergency procedures, manual handling and de-escalation techniques.
- Have an effective action plan in place should the lone worker fail to return on time or does not phone at agreed intervals.
- Ensure employees have adequate means of communication or systems to summon help (this may include but is not limited to EPIRBS, satellite phones, GPS devices etc.).
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Issued: 19 April 2016
Next review: November 2017

Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work activities and to co-operate with the employer to enable compliance with health and safety legislation. Before proceeding to remote areas or being in a situation where the employee is classed as a lone or remote worker employees are to ensure that they have carried out a risk assessment with their supervisor, Team Coordinator or designated person and comply with any procedures and risk control measures put into place.

Responsibility of Employees

Employees shall:

- Not undertake any activity alone, which normally would require two or more people to complete the task.
- Carry out all activities in a safe manner in accordance with procedures and training they have undertaken.
- Be familiar with all communication devices for indicating an emergency situation and fully understand the service that supports the device and the policies to be adhered to in order for the service to be effective;
- Test all equipment required, including communication equipment before leaving the work base.
- Not work alone or in remote areas if equipment is faulty.
- Be aware of any potential hazards and the risk management procedures required for the particular locations, where they are required to work alone or in remote locations.
- Contact the Supervisor/ designated person at the agreed call in times. In some remote locations this will mean driving to a designated spot with radio or mobile phone reception.
- Ensure that all communication devices/means for summoning help are on hand and functioning correctly.

Assessment and Control of Risks associated with lone or remote work

Team co-ordinators/supervisors need to identify the potential hazards faced by lone or remote workers and assess the associated risks. This includes ensuring that measures are in place to avoid or control such risks. Where the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for work to be done safely by a lone or remote worker, alternative arrangements must be made. The ‘Working Alone Risk Assessment Sample Questions’ (Appendix A) can be used as a guide for this process.

Special attention is required when assessing lone worker activities as the risks inherent in such work are exacerbated by the lack of normal channels of support. Training is particularly important, as there will be no direct supervision of work. Monitoring procedures also need to be established to ensure that lone/remote workers are following safe systems of work.
References & Associated Documents

- NSW Work, Health and Safety Act 2011
- NSW Work, Health and Safety Regulation 2011
Whenever an employee is working alone or in a remote location and the risk assessment identifies a call in system as a valid control, an agreed call in process must be established. The following information provides a basic call in process, however if a more detailed process is necessary it should be developed in consultation with all key stakeholders and included as an attachment to the specific lone/remote worker risk assessment.

In the event of the lone worker not ‘reporting in’, the designated person should carry out the following:

1. Telephone the lone worker/remote on the number(s) given. If there is no response, leave a phone message with the time of the call, and state that the lone / remote worker is overdue for reporting in.

2. Repeat this after 15 minutes, and a third time up to one hour after the due reporting-in time. If there is still no response then the designated person should exhaust all other options before calling the emergency services.

3. If still unable to contact or locate the lone/remote worker, the designated person should call the local police (use 000 only if you are sure there is an emergency, though it is better to err on the side of caution). The police should be advised of the Lone Working Procedures, the areas being visited, travel details, any known risks, reporting in times and any contact details; and they should leave a contact number should further information be required.

4. If any other emergency services are involved, the designated person should also advise them of the details provided by the lone worker, notably the areas being visited, travel details, any known risks, reporting-in times and contact details.

Note: Mobile phones should not be used while driving or undertaking certain activities.
Annexure 2: Lone Worker Risk Assessment - Example Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The length of time the person may be working alone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long will the person need to be alone to finish the job?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it reasonable for the person to be alone at all?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a legal requirement for a person to stand by? -Confined spaces, boats</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there a likelihood of fatigue issues?</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. The time of day when a person may be working alone</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Is there increased risk at certain times of the day?</td>
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<th>3. Communication</th>
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<td>What forms of communication does the person have access to?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is voice communication essential for the safety of the person?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will emergency communication systems work properly in all situations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If communications are vehicle based, what arrangements are there to cover the person when the person is away from the vehicle?</td>
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<th>4. The Location of the work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is the work in a remote location?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the form of transport? The level of risk may vary with the type of transport or vehicle?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the vehicle fitted with emergency supplies, such as drinking water?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What will happen if there is a vehicle breakdown?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will the person be required to leave the vehicle for long periods of time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a first aid kit in the vehicle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If first aid equipment is vehicle based, what arrangements are there to cover the person when they are away from the vehicle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What level of first aid training is required for the person to be able to use the first aid equipment?</td>
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<th>5. The nature of the work</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is there adequate information, instruction for the person to work alone safely?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What plant and equipment may be used?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there high risk work, eg work at height, hazardous substances, chainsaws, firearms, animals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is there an effective system for checking PPE, clothing and emergency equipment is packed and in good order?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a procedure for regular contact with the person who works alone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the person is inside a locked building, how will emergency services gain access if the person is unable to let them in? eg cleaners at night/after hours</td>
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<tr>
<th>6. The competencies and work experience of the employee working alone</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ability to contact someone? Does the person speak English?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you aware of any pre-existing medical condition that may increase risk?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the person physically capable of completing all work activity alone?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the person likely to cope in unexpected and stressful situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the level of work experience and training?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the person received training in first aid, vehicle breakdowns, and communication systems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a road vehicle is used, is the person competent to drive on country roads and where applicable in off-road situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These are examples of the types of questions you can ask when you are assessing risk for a person who works alone.*