Minimum Standard – Remote or Isolated Work

October, 2014

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Responsible Officer 
Executive Director – Human Resources

Approved by
Executive Director – Human Resources

Approved and commenced
October, 2014

Review by
October, 2017

Relevant Legislation, Ordinance, Rule and/or Governance Level Principle the Standard supports
Work Health and Safety Act 2012
Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012

Responsible Organisational Unit
Work Health and Safety Unit – Human Resources
Executive Summary

The University of Tasmania must manage the risks associated with remote or isolated work, including ensuring effective communication with the worker carrying out remote or isolated work, in accordance with the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012, S. 48.

Remote or isolated work is defined in the Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice as "work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical assistance and emergency services”.

More Information

For further information, contact the Work Health and Safety Unit

Email: health.safety@utas.edu.au

Using this Standard

This Minimum Standard applies to the management of remote or isolated work undertaken by any Organisational Unit of the University, whether on a University campus or any other place where work is carried out by or on behalf of the University.

Remote or isolated work may be undertaken by a worker of the University who is a member of staff, a postgraduate student, volunteer or contractor; or as an undergraduate student.

Where remote or isolated work is associated with a University field activity, the health and safety risks are managed under the Field Activity Minimum Standard and where applicable are assessed and controlled through the FieldTeq system.

Standard Provisions

4.1 Responsibility

The Officer of the Organisational Unit is responsible for ensuring that the undertaking of remote or isolated work within the Organisational Unit is identified.

Where risk associated with remote or isolated work is identified it is to be recorded in the Organisational Risk Register.

Where remote or isolated work is identified, the relevant manager/supervisor of the Organisational Unit is responsible for ensuring risk is assessed, appropriate risk controls are implemented and the controls are reviewed for effectiveness.

The risk assessment, risk control and control review are to be documented.

Guidance is provided in Appendix 1 of this standard and in the Project and Task Risk Management Minimum Standard.

4.2 Isolated or Remote Work

A worker may be isolated even though other people are close by, for example, a cleaner working by themselves at night in a University building.
In other cases, a worker may be away from populated areas, for example at a University farm or facility such as a telescope.

Remote and isolated work can include situations such as:

- carrying out after hours or all-night work
- a researcher carrying out work alone
- undertaking work at geographically isolated facility or in the field
- a community researcher dealing with a member of the public while isolated from support.

A worker may be alone for a short time, or for an extended period in a remote location.

4.3 Assessing the risks

The following factors are to be considered by the Organisational Unit when assessing the risks of remote or isolated work:

- length of time the person may be working alone
- time of day when a person may be working alone
- communication
- location of the work
- nature of the work
- skills and capabilities of the worker.

A risk assessment checklist is available on the Work Health and Safety Website.

Further guidance on assessing risk for remote and isolated work can be found in the Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice.

4.4 Controlling the risks

The following risk controls are to be considered by the Organisational Unit for remote or isolated work:

- buddy system
- workplace layout and design
- communication systems that will allow a worker to call for help in the event of an emergency at any time, for example:
  - personal security systems
  - radio communication systems
  - satellite communication systems
  - distress beacons or EPIRBs
  - mobile phones

- movement records, for example:
  - call-in systems with supervisors or colleagues
  - satellite tracking systems with the capability of sending messages as part of a scheduled call in system, and with distress or alert functions.

- training, information and instruction, for example:
  - training in dealing with potentially aggressive clients
- using communications systems
- administering first aid
- obtaining emergency assistance
- driving off-road vehicles
- bush survival.

A risk control guide is provided in Appendix 1.

Further guidance on controlling risk for remote and isolated work can be found in the *Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice*.

5 **Supporting Documentation**

- *Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice*
- *Work Health and Safety Policy*
- *Project and Task Risk Management Procedure*
- *Remote or Isolated Work Risk Assessment Checklist*

6 **Glossary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Unit</td>
<td>Means the secondary organisational unit in the academic structure of the University, reporting directly to the College Executive Deans, as per Ordinance 14 – Academic Structure.</td>
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| College | (a) the primary organisational unit in the academic structure of the University, as per Ordinance 14 – Academic Structure  
(b) the University College |
| Executive Dean | Means:  
(a) the Executive Dean of the relevant College, or  
(b) in relation to the University College, the Principal of the University College and includes an authorised delegate of the Executive Dean. |
| Head of Academic Unit | Means the head of the relevant Academic Unit |
| Organisational Unit | College, Faculty, School, Centre, University Institute, other University Entity, Division, Section or University Business Enterprise. |
| Officer | Members of Council, Executive Deans, Heads of Academic Units, Heads of Divisions and Sections and Members of IMAS, Menzies and AMC Boards having strategic management responsibility are considered to be Officers pursuant to Section 27 of the *Work Health and Safety Act*. |
Remote or isolated work

Work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical assistance and emergency services.

Worker

In accordance with Section 28 of the Act and includes employees, contractors, students and volunteers undertaking work at a University workplace.

7 Versioning

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<tr>
<td>Current Version</td>
<td>Version 2</td>
<td>Remote or Isolated Work Minimum Standard (current document); approved October 2014, amended in December 2017 to incorporate the finalised academic structure.</td>
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8 Appendix
APPENDIX 1: REMOTE OR ISOLATED WORK RISK CONTROL GUIDE

Working alone or remotely increases the risk of any job. Exposure to violence and poor access to emergency assistance are the main hazards that increase the risk of remote or isolated work. The following factors should be considered when controlling the risks:

**Buddy system**
Some jobs present such a high level of risk that workers should not work alone, for example jobs where there is a risk of violence or where work is carried out in confined spaces.

**Workplace layout and design**
Workplaces and their surrounds can be designed to reduce the likelihood of violence, for example by installing physical barriers, monitored CCTV and enhancing visibility.

**Communication systems**
The type of system chosen will depend on the distance from the base and the environment in which the worker will be located or through which he or she will be travelling. Expert advice and local knowledge may be needed to assist with the selection of an effective communication system.

If a worker is working alone in a workplace that has a telephone, communication via the telephone is 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, for example:

- **Personal security systems**, being wireless and portable, are suitable for people moving around or checking otherwise deserted workplaces. Some personal security systems include a non-movement sensor that will automatically activate an alarm transmission if the transmitter or transceiver has not moved within a certain time.

- **Radio communication systems** enable communication between two mobile users in different vehicles or from a mobile vehicle and a fixed station. These systems are dependent upon a number of factors such as frequency, power and distance from or between broadcasters.

- **Satellite communication systems** enable communication with workers in geographically remote locations. Satellite phones allow voice transmission during transit, but their operation can be affected by damage to aerials, failure of vehicle power supplies, or vehicle damage.

- **Distress beacons** should be provided where life-threatening emergencies may occur, to pinpoint location and to indicate by activation of the beacon that an emergency exists. Distress beacons include Emergency Position Indication Radio Beacons (EPIRB) used in ships and boats, Emergency Locator Transmitters (ELT) used in aircraft and Personal Locator Beacons (PLB) for personal use.

- **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. Geographical features may impede the use of mobile phones, especially at the edge of the coverage area, and different models have different capabilities in terms of effective range from the base station. 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 alone. If any gaps in coverage are likely, other methods of communication should be considered. It is important that batteries are kept charged and a spare is available.

**Movement records**
Knowing where workers are expected to be can assist in controlling the risks, for example call-in systems with supervisors or colleagues. Satellite tracking systems or devices may
also have the capability of sending messages as part of a scheduled call in system, and have distress or alert functions.

_Training, information and instruction_

Workers need training to prepare them for working alone and, where relevant, in remote locations. For example, training in dealing with potentially aggressive clients, using communications systems, administering first aid, obtaining emergency assistance driving off-road vehicles or bush survival.

_Managing the Work Environment and Facilities_