

3.27 Remote and Isolated Work

POLICY TITLE: REMOTE AND ISOLATED WORK

FILE REF: SC67

EXPIRY DATE: MAY 2027

PURPOSE

Lockhart Shire Council, as part of its commitment to Work Health and Safety, recognises its obligation to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety and wellbeing of employees who undertake remote or isolated work.

In accordance with this commitment the Council will provide and maintain an adequate and reliable system for regular communication for people who work alone in the following situations:

- In an area that is remote from others or isolated from the assistance of others because of time, location or the nature of the work; or
- In a situation that involves the operation or maintenance of plant, or the handling of a hazardous substance; or
- In an area /activity that is dangerous for the employee to perform alone.

The following emergency procedures developed for remote and or isolated work shall form part of the Council emergency response plan and be subject to testing, monitoring and review as described below.

POLICY STATEMENT

If a staff 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 will be made available. In this instance electronic personal duress devices are provided to staff, in both an on-person form and fixed to the designated vehicle.

Personal duress devices

Personal duress devices are provided to specific staff who are recognised as 'lone workers'. Staff are to be trained in the use of a personal duress device prior to them being issued. When activated, a duress device will send a mobile SMS message and email to nominated supervising staff for response.

The SMS message acknowledges that a personal duress device has been activated and identifies the vehicle to which it belongs.

The email message acknowledges that a personal duress device has been activated, while also identifying the location from which the signal was sent, the vehicle type, and a map of where the event occurred.

Use of personal duress devices

The following procedure is to be observed by supervising staff in the event that a personal duress device is activated.

1. Upon receiving notification of a distress signal, any supervising staff member shall make an immediate attempt to contact the lone worker by phone, or radio (if available).
2. If contact with the lone worker has not been made within 10 minutes, the supervising staff shall ensure that emergency services are contacted and briefed. Any instructions issued by emergency services shall be followed.
3. Following contact with emergency services, the supervising staff member shall communicate with remaining supervising staff of the outcome of the event and arrange for a Council representative to attend the site of the incident if required or deemed necessary.

Procedure testing

To ensure all personal duress devices are working correctly, the following testing procedure is to take place:

1. All vehicles fitted with personal duress devices are allocated from the Lockhart Works Depot. On the first working day of every working week, at 7.00am, each device shall be tested to ensure they are working correctly, by pressing the fixed button as well as a second test from the on-person unit. Supervisors are to acknowledge receipt of test calls.

3.27 Remote and Isolated Work (cont'd)

2. In the event of a non-response from a personal duress device, it shall be immediately declared unfit for use and reported to supervisor of the employee testing the duress unit.
3. Personal duress devices are powered by single cell batteries. On the first working day after daylight saving ends each year, batteries are to be replaced with new batteries by the Plant Supervisor and recorded on the plant maintenance record for that vehicle.

Responsibilities

Council's General Manager is accountable for:

- Facilitating Council meeting its legislative duties for remote and isolated work;
- Approving any reasonably practicable budgetary expenditure necessary for remote and isolated work as required.

Directors, managers and supervisors are accountable for:

- Checking that all reasonably foreseeable hazards associated with remote and isolated work are identified, assessed and controlled when elimination is not practicable, in consultation with employees;
- Implementing controls, in consultation with employees or other stakeholders, and evaluating and reviewing them for effectiveness;
- testing personal duress devices as required by this Policy.

Employees are responsible for:

- Keeping next of kin or emergency contact details up-to-date with the Council;
- Attending training when required;
- Following any instructions given for their own or others' safety;
- Maintaining contact with their Functional Manager, or Supervisor in accordance with the agreed contact strategy when undertaking remote or isolated work;
- Reporting hazardous situations or safety problems when undertaking any remote and/or isolated work, immediately to their Manager or Supervisor.

Office Based Employees

- Advising their Supervisor or a colleague if working alone outside their normal core working hours or outside normal business hours when the office is closed.

Reviewed by Council 20 May 2024

Refer Minute No. 81/24

Reviewed by Council 17 May 2021

Refer Minute No. 81/21