HRP20: Lone and Isolated Work

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the management of risks associated with lone and isolated work at Southern Cross University (SCU) are appropriately managed and controlled.

(2) The purpose of this procedure is to ensure Southern Cross University's management, employees, students and others are aware of the risks associated with lone and isolated work in the workplace, management strategies and to provide advice on appropriate controls.

(3) All employees, students and others including both independent contractors and contractors under SCU control are to be made aware of and follow this procedure.

(4) This Procedure applies to all SCU Work Units and sites. The procedure aligns with WHS legislation in the relevant jurisdictions SCU operates in.

Section 2 - Definitions

Emergency Situation	Situations posing immediate risks to health or safety, including fire, bomb threats, intruders, injuries, sudden illnesses, or accidents.
Remote	A location separated by time or distance from essential services, presenting significant risk.
Lone worker device	A device that allows emergency contact when out of mobile service and can be in the form of a satellite phone, Garmin InReach, Personal Location Beacon, EPIRB or equivalent.
Working Alone or in Isolation	Situations where an employee cannot be seen or heard by another person and cannot expect contact for over an hour. This includes working in an office, laboratory, field trips, and or remote locations outside normal hours.
Working When Emergency Response is Limited	Situations where access to emergency services is limited due to working after hours, in remote locations, or in isolation.

Section 3 - General Principles

(5) SCU minimises risks from working remotely or in isolation by:

a. Ensuring all employees have access to this procedure and are inducted into the WHSMS.
b. Ensuring risk assessments are conducted and approved for all work performed alone or in isolation.
c. Maintaining reliable communication methods for employees approved to work alone or in isolation.
d. Submitting travel plans for work conducted in remote or isolated locations, involving travel outside the metropolitan area, interstate, or overseas.
e. Establishing detailed emergency procedures for all work performed alone or in isolation, including specific actions for different types of emergencies, emergency contact numbers, and locations of emergency equipment.
f. Providing psychological support for workers who might face stress or mental health issues due to isolation.

Information, Instruction, and Training

(6) SCU must determine that the employee undertaking the work alone/remotely is competent to undertake the work and record the assessment of competency on the authorisation. Employees 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.

Risk Assessment

(7) Prior to working alone or in isolation, complete a risk assessment eg. WHSMP02-FOR-01-Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control Tool or WHSMP02-FOR-09 – Field Risk Assessment to obtain authorisation from an appropriate supervisor.

(8) For work that is undertaken regularly, the same risk assessment can be utilised if 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.

(9) The assessment process will identify potential hazards associated with the work:

a. Eliminate risks to health and safety as far as reasonably practicable.
b. If unable to eliminate risks, conduct a risk assessment to determine the required control measures.

(10) Following the identification and assessment steps in the risk assessment, control measures will be implemented that consider:

a. Consider factors such as site access, medical and emergency assistance, supervision level, unattended substances, training, security, communication means, and pre-existing medical conditions.
b. Identifying and designating a contact person.
c. Identifying the frequency and method of contact required which may include a lone worker device.
d. Arrangements for rescue, medical, and emergency assistance.
e. Preparing any Safe Work Instructions (SWI) required.
f. Obtaining the authority to perform work alone or in isolation.
g. Periodically evaluate control measures to ensure they remain effective.
h. Review and improve control measures where results indicate existing measures do not control the risk.

Communication

(11) All persons approved to work alone or in isolation must ensure reliable means of communication are maintained at all times. They should notify Security or a supervisor of work commencement and expected completion times when working outside normal hours. A schedule for regular contact with the University or another reliable person, especially for remote or isolated fieldwork, should be established. This could include the use of a lone worker device such as a satellite phone, Personal Location Beacon (PLB), EPIRB for water, or Garmin InReach.

(12) The extent of these arrangements will be dependent on the type of work undertaken and the outcomes of a risk assessment. The amount of contact required whilst working alone or remotely will depend on the potential risk and the experience of the individual undertaking the work.

Low risk working alone

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

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a. Employees or students working back or coming in outside of normal working and class hours should always advise Security that they are on site and again when they are leaving.
b. When off-campus a supervisor or alternate contact person should be notified of the work commencement and expected completion times.
c. All personal security measures, e.g. lock doors, walk in well-lit areas, request a security personal escort as required.
d. If the working alone time is going to be greater than 3 hours, arrange times to phone a contact person to confirm personal safety.

Travel Plans

(14) An itinerary must be submitted to supervisors for all work conducted alone or in isolation, including remote or isolated locations and travel outside the metropolitan area, interstate, or overseas. Supervisors must implement safety protocols for working in isolation.

Emergency Response

(15) Appropriate emergency procedures must be established for all work performed alone or in isolation, and incidents/emergencies should be escalated through the appropriate channels if necessary ie. 000 Emergency responders, Security on site, supervisor etc.

Where Presence of Others Required

(16) Ensure another authorised person is present when performing high-risk activities such as:

a. Handling exposed, energised electrical or electronic systems.
b. Using large volumes of flammable solvents or hazardous substances.
c. Working in extreme temperature environments or confined spaces.

Work Classified as Too Hazardous for Isolation

a. Perform during normal working hours with qualified assistance and supervision.

Authorisation

(17) Prior to working alone or in isolation, complete a risk assessment eg. WHSMP02-FOR-01-Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control Tool or WHSMP02-FOR-09 – Field Risk Assessment to obtain authorisation from an appropriate supervisor.

(18) For work that is undertaken regularly, the same risk assessment can be utilised if 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.

After-Hours Emergency

(19) Contact Emergency Services on 000 for life-threatening emergencies.

(20) Contact campus security in an emergency for immediate on-site response.

Section 4 - Roles and Responsibilities

(21) Refer to WHS Responsibility and Accountability Statement.

Section 5 - Records of Documentation

   a. All relevant documentation will be recorded and kept in accordance with WHS Legislation and other legislative obligations including:
   b. Maintain records for all work performed alone or in isolation, including risk assessments, communication logs, travel plans, and emergency procedures.
   c. Keep records for specified durations, such as 28 days after work or 2 years after a notifiable incident.

Section 6 - Revision and approval history

(22) This procedure will be reviewed as per nominated review dates or because of other events, such as:

   a. Internal and external audit outcomes.
   b. Legislative changes.
   c. Outcomes from management reviews.
   d. Incidents.

Section 7 - References

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011 (QLD) 2017 (NSW)

Section 8 - Related Documents

WHSMP02-FOR-01-Hazard Identification, Risk Assessment and Control Tool
WHS Responsibility and Accountability Statement

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Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	9th December 2024
Review Date	9th December 2027
Approval Authority	Vice President (People and Culture)
Approval Date	9th December 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Kim Franks Vice President (People and Culture)
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