Procedure

Working in Isolation

Please note this procedure is mandatory and staff are required to adhere to the content

Summary

This procedure describes the processes that apply to DECD workers who work alone or in isolation.

Table 1 - Document details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication date</th>
<th>October 2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>File number</td>
<td>14/3498</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Related legislation | Work Health and Safety Act 2012  
 | Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 |
| Related policies, procedures, guidelines, standards, frameworks | Confined Space Procedure  
 | Hazard Management Procedure  
 | Hazardous Manual Tasks Procedure  
 | Inclement Weather Procedure  
 | Infection Control Procedure  
 | Injury Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure  
 | Managing the Risk of Falls  
 | Safe Driving Procedure  
 | WHS Consultation and Communication Procedure  
<p>| WHS Training Procedure |
| Version          | 2.1          |
| Replaces         | 2.0          |
| Policy officer (position) | Senior Safety Consultant, Work Health and Safety |
| Policy officer (phone) | 8226 1759 |
| Policy sponsor (position) | Director, Workplace Health and Safety |
| Executive director responsible (position and office) | Executive Director, People and Culture |
| Applies to       | All persons entering or using DECD premises or involved in a DECD activity, including all DECD workers and others |
| Key words        | Working alone, isolation, remote, work, health, safety |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Revision description</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/09/2011</td>
<td>1.0</td>
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References to Health and Safety Services amended to Work Health and Safety |
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1. Title

Working in Isolation Procedure

2. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the safety, health and security of DECD workers who are working alone or in isolation.

3. Scope

This procedure applies to all DECD workers engaged in activities or services provided at a DECD workplace that involve working alone or in isolation. This includes but is not limited to:

- Working alone on/off site in isolation
- Working alone after core business hours
- Working alone with children and/or young people
- Conducting home visits or off-site visits with families, children and young people.
- Working from home
- Working from a vehicle

4. Procedure detail

4.1 Working in isolation

A worker is defined as working in isolation when they are isolated from assistance of other persons because of the location, time or the nature of the work being undertaken.

DECD workers may be required to work in isolation as part of their role description. For some, this may be infrequent and for others it is a regular part of their duties over long periods of time.

4.2 Identifying hazards

The site manager must ensure that hazards associated with working in isolation are identified and controlled in consultation with affected workers and the HSR prior to the commencement of work in isolation.

Hazards may include, but are not limited to the following:

- The length of time a worker/s may be working alone
- The time of day when a worker/s may be working alone
- The individual competencies of a worker/s working alone
- Work location
4.3 Risk Assessment

Prior to allowing workers to work in isolation a risk assessment must be undertaken before the commencement of work tasks/activities.

Risk assessments must be conducted in accordance with the Hazard Management Procedure and documented on a WHS General Risk Assessment Tool.

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.

4.4 Controls

Where specific hazards have been identified, these must be controlled using the Hierarchy of Risk Controls and the Risk Prioritisation Schedule. Risk controls are to be monitored and reviewed in accordance with the Hazard Management Procedure. Examples of effective risk controls may include, but is not limited to the following:

4.4.1 Authorisation

Site managers must establish a local procedure detailing the authorisation process that workers must follow prior to commencing work in isolation. Local procedural requirements may include, but are not limited to the following:

- The creation of a register of workers that are permitted to work alone, that can be accessed by workers and the site manager/s. This register may include but is not limited to the following:
  - Duration of the authorisation
  - Location of work
  - Areas that can be accessed/used by worker/s
  - A description of processes, equipment and tasks that can be undertaken

4.4.2 Worker wellbeing

Site managers must establish a local procedure to monitor the whereabouts and wellbeing of worker/s working in isolation. Local procedural requirements may include, but are not limited to the following:
The completion of an appropriate Travel Management Plan. Refer to the Safe Driving Procedure.

Scheduled check-ins or regularly scheduled contact with affected workers with a nominated contact person.

Utilisation of tracking or emergency mobile phone apps.

The creation of an off-site register that enables workers to record their work schedule that can be accessed by workers and the site manager/s. This register may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Mobile phone number
- Destination location
- Arrival and departure times
- Estimated return home

Emergency response

4.4.3 Communication systems

Regular contact must be made with workers working in isolation at pre-determined intervals of time. Communication systems must allow workers to call for assistance at any time in the event of an emergency. Consideration must be given to the following when selecting a communication system:

- The nature of task/s to be performed
- Distance from primary workplace
- Geography of the environment
- Road conditions

Site managers must ensure appropriate communication equipment/accessories are available. Depending on the circumstances, this may include but is not limited to the following:

- Mobile phone with pre-programmed emergency numbers clearly identified so that others can call for assistance if worker is incapacitated.
- Personal security system/duress alarms
- Two-way radio communication system
- Satellite phone
- PLD
- EPIRB

Site managers are responsible for determining if workers require training to install/operate any of the above mentioned equipment/accessories. Workers are responsible for ensuring that communication equipment is in working order and fully charged prior to working alone or performing tasks in isolation.
4.4.4 Safe operating procedures

SOPs may need to be developed for particular tasks, activities or circumstances in which workers are required to work alone/remotely. When determining whether SOPs need to be developed, consideration should be given, but not limited to the following tasks, activities and/or circumstances:

- Use and disposal of hazardous substances
- Working alone with children and/or young people. Refer to section 4.5.2.
- The operation of curriculum supporting, property maintenance and general plant in areas such as, but not limited to:
  - Design and technology workshops
  - Automotive workshops
  - Science laboratories
  - Agricultural, aquaculture and horticulture study/production areas
  - Visual and performance arts
  - Home economics and catering areas
  - Ground or property maintenance

4.4.5 Training

Site managers must ensure workers and other persons receive appropriate WHS induction and training requirements prior to working in isolation or in remote situations. Consideration should be given, but not limited to the following areas:

- Driver training. For more information refer to Fleet SA, the DECD Motor Vehicle Procedure and the Safe Driving Procedure.
- First aid. Refer to WHS Workplace First Aid Procedure.
- Managing aggressive behaviour and personal safety.
- Respecting client attitudes, property and needs.
- Conducting home visits.
- Personal Safety and Conflict Awareness.
- Safer Lone Working.

Refer to the WHS Induction and Training Procedure and the Safety Training Matrix.

4.4.6 Emergency Response

In the event of an emergency, workers must initiate a response in accordance with local worker wellbeing procedures. Refer to Section 4.4.2.
In the event of any life threatening emergency or if immediate assistance is not available, help should be sought by the worker/s involved by dialling ‘000’.

Site managers are responsible for ensuring that workers have a means to effectively communicate and access emergency services, such as the supply of a mobile or satellite phone. Refer to Section 4.4.3.

Site managers must ensure that an Emergency Management Plan is in place and simulated evacuation procedures are performed in accordance with the Emergency Management Framework.

4.5 Managing risk factors

4.5.1 Home/off-site visit

Prior to conducting a home/off-site visit

Prior to conducting a home/off-site visit attempts should be made to obtain as much information about the family/educators/care provider as possible when initial contact is made to schedule the first home/off-site visit.

A home/off-site visiting checklist must be completed prior to the first visit.

The checklist must be completed by the worker/s conducting the visit and their manager. Any information from referring internal or external professionals or agencies should also be included.

If any issues have been identified on the checklist, a risk assessment must be completed in accordance with the Hazard Management Procedure and documented on a WHS General Risk Assessment Tool.

Consideration must be given as to whether the visit should:

- Proceed with:
  - Two or more workers
  - The implementation of extra control measures. Refer to Section 4.4. or;

- Not proceed and consideration is given to:
  - The visit being conducted at an alternative off-site location
  - Other options for service delivery.

Child focused home/off-site visits must only be conducted during core business hours, between 9am and 5pm.

Family focused home/off-site visits must only be conducted during core business hours, between 9am and 5pm except under the following circumstances:

- Family availability is outside normal business hours

- Family Day Care Coordinators are monitoring 24 hour care provided by educators due to:
  - Family work related commitments
  - Medical emergency
  - Other exceptional circumstances
New workers without any prior home visiting experience are not to conduct home visits alone until it is deemed by their site manager they are competent.

Two workers should attend the initial/first home/off-site visit.

Verbal or written consent has been provided by the family to conduct the visit, except in the case of a child investigation.

Arrangements have been confirmed with the family on the day of the visit and they have been informed of the purpose of the visit and who will be attending.

If the home visit is necessary consideration has been given for a Police escort and protection for the duration of the visit.

An appropriate vehicle booking has been made with Fleet SA. If a worker is using a private motor vehicle for home/off-site purposes they must complete a ED008 Private Motor Vehicle on Government Business – Approval to Use.

Local site procedures have been following to ensure the whereabouts and wellbeing of workers can be monitored. If relevant a Long Distance Driving Travel Management Plan has been completed. Refer to the Safe Driving Procedure.

Worker/s conducting the home visit have appropriate/relevant training that is current. Refer to WHS Induction and Training Procedure and Safety Training Matrix.

Worker wellbeing monitoring is in place, refer to section 4.4.2.

During the home/off-site visit

On the day of the home/off-site visit it is recommended that the family to be visited is recontacted to confirm meeting arrangements.

Prior to entering the meeting location worker/s conducting the home/off-site visit must ensure:

- Their vehicle is parked so that the exit is not easily blocked by another vehicle. If attending a home, that they do not park in the driveway or in front of the house.
- If the property is located in a no-through road or cul-de-sac, that their vehicle is parked facing the direction of the safest exit route.
- If two workers are conducting the visit, then they should consider that one carry the car keys and the other hold the mobile phone. That they ensure car keys or phone are not placed at bottom of a large bag or accessible to others.
- Check the signal strength of the mobile phone at the location.

After knocking on the door stand to one side in case the door is abruptly opened.

Pause and listen for conversation, this may give clues on what to expect.

Reconsider entering if high levels of security devices such as electronic or self-locking doors/gates are installed.

Trust any instincts or body functions that may predict impending danger such as rapid heartbeat, cold sweat or dry mouth.
Introduce yourself, show your identification and explain the reason for your visit.

Ensure you are visiting the correct person.

Re-consider entry if:

- The person you are to visit is not present.
- There is a large number of people present that were not identified when initial contact was made to schedule the visit.
- Not clearly invited.
- Anyone in the house appears to be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs.
- High levels of security devices such as electronic or self-locking doors/gates are installed.

Workers should leave the home immediately at any stage if they:

- Feel uncomfortable and/unsafe.
- Are subjected to any harassment, abuse and/or aggressive behaviour.
- Are requested to do so.

**Upon returning from the home/off-site visit**

Workers must adhere to the local level procedures in relation to worker wellbeing monitoring and must notify their nominated contact person upon their return.

If any additional considerations were identified during the visit these should be discussed with the manager and noted on the checklist. Worker/s in conjunction with their manager determine if any of these considerations should be risk assessed prior to any subsequent visits.

**4.5.2 Working alone on-site**

DECD workers may be required to work alone on-site as part of their role description, either outside or during normal business hours in areas such as, but not limited to:

- Office or administration
- Family Day Care
- Rural Care Program
- Residential Care accommodation facilities
- Design and technology workshops
- Science laboratories
- Agricultural/aquaculture study/production
- Arts/performance arts
- Home economics and catering facilities
o Grounds facilities and sheds

It is recommended that the following activities and/or circumstances be considered by the site manager and worker/s for the purposes of developing local procedures for working in isolation where necessary:

- Work area design such as office or counter layout, ventilation, lighting, safety barriers, security screens.
- Workers level of training, particularly in relation to after-hours emergency procedures. Refer to Section 4.4.6.
- The use of personal security devices and/or duress alarms.
- Egress to and from buildings or facilities and access to transportation.
- Lock up procedures.
- Security of the area where work is to be performed.
- Building/grounds security notifications and authorisations, security personal escorts.
- If working alone time is longer than 3 hours, arrange a scheduled check-ins with a nominated contact person. Refer to Section 4.4.2.
- Development of safe operating procedures. Refer to Section 4.4.4.

4.5.3 Working alone with children and young people

DECD workers may be required to work alone with children and young people as part of their role description, in areas such as but not limited to the following:

- Residential Care
- DECD Rural Care Program
- Family Day Care – In venue Care

It is recommended that the following activities and/or circumstances be considered by the site manager and worker/s and local procedures be established where necessary:

- The arrival and collection of children and young people, consideration should be given to, but not limited to the following:
  - Exterior doors to remain locked until the arrival of the first family.
  - Maintenance of an attendance record to be signed by parents/carers at drop off and pick up.
  - Non-attendance/collection of children or young people.
  - Written permission for another adult to drop off and/or pick up children or young people
  - Children and young people leaving care independently.
  - Workers should leave the workplace with the last adult and child/ren to be signed out for the day.
Arrangements to ensure injury incidents can be entered into the IRMS as soon as possible, but within 12 hours of the event.

Adherence to child protection requirements.

Communication Systems including:
- Appropriate device selection, refer to in Section 4.4.3
- Creation of an emergency contact list that is regularly updated, with more than two persons listed as secondary responders who have provided written consent.
- The use of personal security devices and/or duress alarms.

Emergency response measures including:
- Local evacuation plan detailing what needs to be done in event of an emergency. Refer to Emergency Management Framework.
- Nomination of alternate contact person within a reasonable distance of the DECD workplace who is able to respond immediately to an emergency.
- The use of a personal emergency call device that can be used to initiate contact with emergency contact personnel.

Response to illness or injury, including the establishment of procedures in the event that:
- A child or young person becomes ill or sustains an injury and the worker requires assistance.
- The worker becomes ill or sustains an injury.

Site considerations including:
- Opening and lock up procedures
- Egress to and from buildings or facilities.
- Security arrangements
- Work area layout to ensure children and young people can be supervised at all times whilst in care
- Procedures for use of toileting facilities if not located in the primary facility.

4.5.4 Working from home
Refer to the Working at Home Procedure for information regarding working from home arrangements for DECD workers.

4.6 Incident Management
The site manager must ensure that incidents are managed as follows:

- Report incident according to the Injury Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure
- Report all Notifiable Incidents, Serious Injuries and Illnesses and Dangerous Incidents within 24 hours to SafeWork SA on 1800 777 209.
- Preserve the incident site, so far as is reasonably practicable, until an inspector arrives at the site, or directs otherwise.
4.7 Records Management

Refer to the following procedures for information regarding records management:

- Temporary Records
- Destruction of Records
- Permanent Records

Records must be retained, in accordance with the State Records of South Australia, General Disposal Schedules.

For further information refer to the Central Office Records Management Unit or the Families SA Records Management Team.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Table 3 - Roles and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Authority/responsibility for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health and Safety Representatives (HSR)</td>
<td>Active participation in hazard identification and risk management processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other persons</td>
<td>• Take reasonable care for his or her own health and safety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Take reasonable care that his or her acts or omissions do not adversely affect the health and safety of other persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comply, so far as the person is reasonably practicable, with any reasonable instruction that is given by any DECD worker to allow DECD to comply with the Work Health and Safety Act 2012.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nominated Contact Person</td>
<td>Monitoring the whereabouts and wellbeing of worker/s working in isolation by implementing scheduled, regular check-ins/contact with worker/s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site managers</td>
<td>Site managers must ensure:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hazards associated with working in isolation are identified and controlled in consultation with affected workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Where workers are represented by a HSR, they are consulted and invited to participate in the risk assessment process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Local procedures are established, in consultation with workers pertaining to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Isolation authorisation processes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Worker wellbeing monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Behaviour management strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Monitoring, evaluation and review

This procedure will be subject to review every 3 years by Work Health and Safety, or earlier if there has been a change in any legislation or government policy.

Grievances arising out of the application of this procedure will be addressed in line with DECD Complaint Resolution Procedures.

7. Definitions and abbreviations

Table 4 - Definitions and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Consultation is a two-way process between management and workers where the parties talk to each other, listen to concerns of the other party, seek and share information, and consider all the issues before a decision is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECD</td>
<td>The Department for Education and Child Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECD Workplace</td>
<td>All facilities and property, including land, buildings, structures, outside areas whether owned, rented, or leased by DECD, and all vehicles owned, leased, rented, contracted for, or controlled by DECD used for transporting others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPIRB</td>
<td>Electronic Position Indicating Radio Beacon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazard</strong></td>
<td>A hazard is a situation or thing that has the potential to cause harm/injury to people, property or the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and Safety Representative (HSR)</strong></td>
<td>Is a person elected as the Health and Safety Representative for the work group of which the worker is a member.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IRMS</strong></td>
<td>Incident and Response Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Venue Care</strong></td>
<td>DECD Family Care operated service where a registered educator operates a care service from a DECD sites or other approved community location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long Distance Driving</strong></td>
<td>Driving for more than 50% of a working day in a rural or remote area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Must</strong></td>
<td>Indicates that a process is a legislative, Australian Standard or DECD specification requirement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nominated Contact Person</strong></td>
<td>The site manager or person delegated the responsibility of ensuring a worker makes check-ins as scheduled and who must be aware of the steps/actions that should be actioned/occur within 2 hours of a missed check-in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Other persons** | Other persons include the following:  
  - Student  
  - Young person  
  - Child  
  - Clients  
  - Visitors  
  - Parent/Carer  
  - Any other person who attends a DECD workplace from time to time. |
| **PLD** | Personal Location Device |
| **Routine Driving** | Driving for less than 50% of a working day in an urban area. |
| **Should** | Indicates a recommended course of action. If this recommendation is not adopted, than an equivalent or higher standard of health and safety must be provided by another method. |
| **Site manager** | Any person who has the responsibility, management or control of a DECD workplace or work unit. This includes, but is not limited to Executive Directors, Education Directors, Directors, Principals, Pre-school Directors, Managers and Supervisors. |
| **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)** | Written procedures that define the techniques, processes and best practices required to conduct work safely. |
Travel Management Plan | A travel management plan aids workers and site managers in selecting and implementing effective risk controls prior to the commencement of travel in a motor vehicle.

WHS | Work health and safety.

Working is isolation | A worker is defined as working alone, in isolation and/or remotely when assistance from other persons cannot be obtained due to location, time or nature of the work being undertaken.

Worker | A worker is defined under Section 7 of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* as any person who works for DECD as a:

- Employee
- Trainee
- Volunteer
- Outworker
- Apprentice
- Work experience student
- Contractor or sub-contractor
- Employees of a contractor or sub-contractor
- Employee of a labour hire company assigned to work for DECD.

8. Supporting documents

- [Hazard Management Procedure](#)
- [WHS General Risk Assessment Tool](#)
- [Safe Driving Procedure](#)
- [Routine Driving Travel Management Plan](#)
- [Long Distance Driving Travel Management Plan](#)
- [Fleet SA](#)
- [DECD Motor Vehicle Procedure](#)
- [Hazardous Manual Tasks Procedure](#)
- [WHS Workplace First Aid Procedure](#)
- [WHS Induction and Training Procedure](#)
- [Safety Training Matrix](#)
- [Violence Prevention Action Plan](#)
• Emergency Management Framework
• DECD Site Bushfire Response Procedure
• Inclement Weather Procedure
• Private Motor Vehicle Procedure

9. References
• Work Health and Safety Act 2012
• Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
• Education and Early Childhood Services (Registration and Standards) Act 2011
• Guide to the National Quality Standard

Appendix
• Home-Off-Site Visiting Checklist