Remote and Isolated Work

Couple of takeaways

- Remote and isolated work presents a variety of different hazards and risks and, as such, a risk based approach must be adopted rather than a one size fits all method of controlling the risk.
- Activities that are regarded as High Risk Construction Work under WHS legislation or have otherwise been regarded as high risk by Hydro and require a SWMS are not to be conducted by lone workers.

What is this procedure for?

This procedure describes how remote and isolated work is managed across Hydro. This refers to work where people are unable to get immediate attention from rescue, medical or emergency services due to the location, time or nature of the work being done.

Remote and isolated work can apply to working alone or to multi-person teams working remotely or in geographically isolated areas. This work may take place during normal working hours or outside of these hours and includes work from home and travel (local and international).

How do we plan for tasks involving remote and isolated work?

Due to the wide variety of circumstances that could be regarded as remote and isolated work, a risk based approach must be adopted. The purpose of this is to identify the hazards and risks associated with the particular work and put in place relevant and appropriate controls.

Some of the hazards related to remote and isolated work may include:

- Poor access to timely emergency assistance
- Poor access to emergency or other communications
- Exposure to violence
- Exposure to weather conditions
- Work related stress
- Fatigue.

Following identification of the hazards and risks, the next step is to work through the hierarchy of control, from the strongest tier to the least, to identify measures that may be implemented to reduce the risks related to the work.

In addition to ensuring reliable communication methods, examples of other controls include:

Elimination

Eliminate working remotely or in isolation for certain high risk activities.

Providing accommodation to eliminate the need to drive or work extended hours.

Substitution

Substitute remote and isolated work for other technological solutions

Substitute materials, equipment and chemicals for less hazardous ones for the task to minimise the risk

Relocate the work.

Reschedule it to occur with other workers or at better times of the day/year.

Isolation

Providing accommodation near project work isolates workers from the hazard of regular long distance travel and extended work hours

Engineering

Reliable communication systems

Distress beacons

Vehicle tracking systems

Administration

Buddy system

Emergency plans, including personal emergency plans (i.e. allergies or medical conditions)

Phone coverage maps

Fatigue and fitness for work assessments

Training, information and instruction

Provide security for out of hours work

Movement records and journey management planning

Driver training

Vehicle maintenance and equipment

Personal protective Equipment (PPE)

Ensuring all correct PPE is available and ready for the work, including adequate clothing for the expected weather conditions

What specific controls or standards apply across the Hydro Tasmania Group?

Due to the various levels of exposure to remote and isolated work hazards across the Hydro Tasmania Group and the various methods available to monitor and manage the risk, each business area may adopt their own approach based on the approved controls identified in Appendix 1.

In each case, a risk assessment (Take 5 as a minimum) must be used to identify the relevant controls to be adopted.

High Risk Work and Lone Work

The following activities are not to be conducted by a lone worker:

- Activities defined under work, health and safety legislation as High Risk Construction Work.
- Activities defined by Hydro as being a high risk activity and requiring a Safe Work Method Statement (e.g. abrasive blasting).

What hazards and risks should be considered during the risk assessment?

Whilst the risks associated with remote and isolated work are varied and dependent on the type of work being conducted, the below should be considered to determine whether they're applicable and require suitable controls. This list is not exhaustive and many more risks may exist depending on the scope of work.

- Exposure to violence

- Poor access to emergency assistance
- Fatigue
- Communication issues (e.g. mobile coverage)
- Weather conditions
- Ground or access conditions
- Fauna or Flora Hazards
- Pre-existing medical conditions
- Risks associated with operating plant or machinery
- Getting lost

What training is required?

Managers and supervisors must ensure that workers participating in remote or isolated work are provided with information to prepare them for the work. This information may include, but is not limited to:

- Using communication system
- Fatigue management controls
- First aid training
- Off road vehicle use
- Training in relevant emergency response requirements
- Known hazards related to the task or location

Workers must be trained and competent in the work activity which is being undertaken in a remote and isolated situation and conduct a risk assessment to determine suitable additional controls.

What personal equipment is required?

The PPE required is dependent upon the type of work being conducted and will be identified during the risk assessment process.

How do we manage emergencies or incidents?

Emergency response considerations need to be incorporated into the planning phase of the remote and isolated work. These must take into account the types of activity being conducted and the level of risk.

Emergencies or incidents related to remote and isolated work shall be raised via the method of communication selected during the risk assessment and control process. The primary point of contact shall escalate the incident as per the Emergency Preparedness process.

Missed or failed check-in / call -in

The following should be adopted as the escalation process following a failure to call in by the agreed timeline:

- Make a record of the time that the call in failure occurred.
- Attempt to make contact with other members of the work party.
- Check location of work party's vehicle on vehicle tracking system.
- Communicate with other members of works party's team to check if they have been in contact with any of the work party.
- Continue to attempt to re-establish contact at 5 minute intervals.
- If contact is not made within 30 minutes (or other pre-established timeline), escalate via the Emergency Preparedness process.

Appendix 1

Control	Description
Work Management	Rostering and work coordination may be used to minimise or eliminate the need for remote or isolated work. Scheduling work in remote or isolated locations so that concurrent activities are being performed to ensure more than one worker is at the location may reduce the risks of lone or isolated work.
Work group size and composition	Increasing the size or composition of the work group undertaking the work is an effective method of reducing the risk. By increasing the size of the work group, there are additional people available to respond to an emergency or raise an alarm. Similarly, by introducing people to the work group with applicable experience and training in remote and isolated work (first aid, emergency response etc.), the risks associated with the work can be reduced.
Journey Management	By registering a set journey path, expected times of arrival, key contacts and primary point of contact and agreed check in timelines, Journey Management planning can reduce the risk of travel by establishing escalation processes and assisting in rescue and response times.
Remote or Isolated worker monitoring	Monitoring worker movements and locations whilst they are working remotely or in isolation is a principle risk control measure. Formal monitoring arrangements should be defined and implemented to ensure communication with remote or isolated workers is maintained. The extent of the monitoring arrangements will be dependent on the type of work to be undertaken and the outcomes of the risk assessment. In general, monitoring should involve direct communication with a primary point on contact at intervals not exceeding two hours.
Vehicle tracking system	Allows the movement of vehicles to be tracked, including speed alerts, fatigue management alerts and any significant driving events (rollover, sudden impact, harsh braking). Includes a duress alarm that can be activated from within the vehicle.
'Person down' alarm	Does not allow voice communication, however does allow an alarm to be raised and will trigger automatically when it senses a horizontal or still position for a certain period of time.

Emergency Positioning Indication Radio Beacons (EPIRB) and Personal Locating Beacons (PLB / Spot Tracker)	Does not allow voice communications and is primarily to be used as a last resort or where a life threating emergency has occurred. May come equipped with a check in function which may be utilised to send a message in situations where voice communication is not available.
Communications	Landline Telephone – Reliable source of communication, however only available in some locations and fixed assets.
	Mobile Telephone – Widely used, however black spots exist across the mobile network and cannot be relied upon in all areas. Network coverage maps, in addition to local knowledge, should be consulted prior to utilising mobile phones as a primary form of communication.
	Satellite Telephone – Allows telephone communication in areas identified as mobile coverage black spots. However, it may be impacted by heavy cloud cover, dense overhead foliage or other issues that could affect a clear line of sight to satellites.
	UHF / VHF Radio – Allows voice communication, however may only communicate with other nearby UHF / VHF radio users and base stations.
Procedures	Working from home, international travel risk management, fitness for work, HSE hazards, risks and opportunities, fatigue management, risk specific procedures (e.g. hot work etc.).
Emergency Response	Emergency response planning is to be incorporated into the overall planning for remote and isolated work.
First Aid Equipment (including defibrillators)	Relevant first aid equipment needs to be available for all remote and isolated work that is selected based on the level of risk and the type of activity being conducted