Remote or isolated work

We generally think of outback areas when we use the term remote or isolated, but in fact a worker can be isolated even in the city. The location, time and nature of the work helps determine remote or isolated circumstances.

- Isolated work may involve work activities undertaken in an isolated area, on or off site, either during or outside normal working hours.
- Remote work may involve work activities undertaken at a location removed from an office environment where there are few people and where communications and travel are difficult. This may include land or sea activities within Australia or overseas.

Risk

A major danger for remote or isolated workers is sustaining an injury that precludes self-rescue.

The actual risks that can be encountered are many and varied and for the purpose of Comcare guidance have been categorized into the following

1. work environment (geographical terrain, climate, plant & fauna)
2. remote premises / accommodation (office, plant and equipment
3. remote communication systems and procedures
4. physical and psychological fitness for duty (fatigue management, disease and recruitment issues)
5. vehicles and travel (land, sea and air –is it fit for purpose and are any modifications compliant)
6. information, training and supervision (including cultural awareness)
7. emergency plans

It is essential that hazard identification and risk management processes are applied to remote or isolated work.

Remedy

Dependant on the context and conditions, but may include for example:

- relocating the work
- provide vehicles, equipment, tools and communication equipment suitable for use in the terrain
- two worker teams
- ensuring workers are physically and mentally fit to perform the work
- appropriate training is provided about working in remote or isolated environments
- avoiding riskier times of the day (i.e. excessive heat, cold, storms and when the circadian

rhythm wants the body to sleep)
- ensure adequate facilities for workers including toilets, drinking water, eating facilities, personal storage
- providing accommodation
- have a check in process whereby workers are required to contact 'home base' at a nominated time
- have an emergency response plan when workers fail to report in at allotted times

Resources

Information Source	Contents
Safe Work Australia - Code of Practice: How to Manage Work Health and Safety Risks	This code provides practical guidance for persons who have duties under the WHS Act and Regulations to manage risks to health and safety
Safe Work Australia - Division 6 of the Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011	Specific information on regulatory obligations for remote and isolated workers
Safe Work Australia - Managing the Work Environment and Facilities	Risk management strategy on managing work environments and facilities
Safe Work Australia - Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination	Information on risk management obligations concerning the consultation of workers
Comcare guide to remote or isolated work	This guide is designed to assist in the identification, assessment and control of the hazards associated with remote or isolated work

Notifications

Information source	What it contains
Comlaw - Incident notification - Part 3, Section 35 to 37 of the Work, Health and Safety Act 2011	The legislative requirements for incident notification to Comcare
Comcare - Guide to incident notification	Helps you decide whether you need to notify Comcare of an injury, illness or dangerous incident under the WHS Act

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