

Standard Operating Procedure for Lone Working/Remote Working/Working from home

TTCC-SOP-02-V1

Overview

Most of the field work that we undertake is carried out by a single staff member. For site assessments, we are often alone in our tasks. Occasionally we can be out of mobile phone coverage range for periods of the day. Working from home, or remote working capabilities have been a normal function of our core work and company culture, even before Covid 19 limitations. There are no recorded minor or major incidents for this task.

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Definition

This procedure describes the considerations and safeguards needed for lone working situations in most settings. This can be an add-on to the primary task (e.g. tree assessment), or the primary task itself when working from home/remotely. Lone working can be in private property, roads, parks, coastal, riparian or bush settings. Remote working includes working from home, or in accommodation anywhere in the country. Working from home is always an office-based administration type task (e.g. computer work station based report writing).

Lone working without supervision

- There will always be greater risks for lone workers with no direct supervision or anyone to help them if things go wrong.
- Keep in touch with lone workers, including those working from home, and ensure regular contact to make sure they are healthy and safe.
- If contact is poor, workers may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect stress levels and mental health.

Description of tasks

Working with display screen equipment (DSE)

For those people who are working at home on a long-term basis, the risks associated with [using display screen equipment \(DSE\)](#) must be controlled. This includes them doing workstation assessments at home.

There is no increased risk from DSE work for those working at home temporarily. So, in that situation employers do not need to ask them to carry out home workstation assessments.

However, employers should provide workers with advice on completing their own basic assessment at home.

There are some simple steps people can take to reduce the risks from display screen work:

- breaking up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity

- avoiding awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
- getting up and moving or doing stretching exercises
- avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time

TTCC responsibilities

- Keep in contact with you
- Plan remote lone work thoroughly
- Train, supervise and monitor lone workers
- Know where lone workers are, with pre-agreed intervals of regular contact, using phones, radios, email etc
- Provide other devices for raising the alarm, operated manually or automatically – where needed
- Ensure a lone worker has returned to their base once they have completed their task

Worker responsibilities

- Take a second person with you if possible
- Stay in regular contact with supervisors or other staff.
- Call in before starting lone work
- Call in regularly during lone work (every two hours is advisable, although this can depend on the task and setting)
- Pre-arrange your point of contact and period of call in.
- Identify areas where they may be limited phone signal and how long you expect to be there

Safety equipment

When undertaking remote lone work, you should carry safety equipment with you that would ordinarily be available at a base point of operations. For example, at the office or in your vehicle.

When working away from your vehicle in remote places take a backpack or bag with you.

Wear appropriate clothing, you do not have to wear branded clothing if it is not fit for the task.

Carriable safety items:

- First aid kit
- Water
- Food
- Correct clothing (wet weather/sun protection/warm layer)
- Power bank for charging phone
- A whistle for attracting attention. (The international standard help call is six short blasts, three times over one minute. The reply is three short blasts. Continue until you are found)
- Personal locator beacon (PLB). These can be rented for specific jobs
- Navigation equipment (standalone GPS device, map and compass)

Activities/hazards	Risks	Likelihood	Typical Controls	Discussion
A person's medical suitability to work alone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased stress • Physical injury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to the Director if you are unable to perform a task for any reason • STOP. Do not push on if you are uncomfortable 	<p>If for any reason you feel unable to perform a task due for physical or mental reasons, say so. Tasks can be reassigned, or you can be accompanied to help. Do not feel under any pressure.</p> <p>When these situations arise TTCC should assess ways to make specific tasks more accessible for staff members.</p>

Working from home (DSE – Display Screen Equipment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aches, pains or discomfort related to their temporary DSE arrangements • adverse effects of working in isolation, on remote IT systems • working longer hours without adequate rest and recovery breaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For some equipment (eg keyboards, mouse, riser) this could mean allowing workers to take this equipment home. • Check in regularly to set realistic expectations of work outputs. • Where working from home arrangements become permanent, TTCC should explain how to carry out full workstation assessments and provide workers with appropriate equipment and advice on control measures. 	Provide supervision, education and training, as well as implementing enough control measures to protect the homeworker.
Stress and mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home working can cause work-related stress and affect people’s mental health • Being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keep in direct contact with home workers so you can recognise signs of stress as early as possible. • It is also important to have an emergency point of contact and to share this so people know how to get help if they need it. 	If you feel that your mental health is not what it should be get help. You do not have to speak about this with other staff members if you do not want to. Auckland Counselling Clinic is close to the office on Constellation Drive. Call or email them to book an appointment in confidence. Consultations can be in person or by video conference. If you are comfortable sharing this with any member of staff, do so. Any member of the TTCC staff will help you with this process in confidence.
Vehicle security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft from vehicles that you are away from for long periods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hide all valuable items or take them with you 	For utes with tray canopies leave valuable equipment inside the cab, where alarms are operative. Canopies are easy to break into.
Slips trips and falls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incapacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise more caution for this hazard in remote settings • Do not take risks • Find alternative routes or methods 	Slips trips and falls have increased consequences in remote settings. Greater caution is needed than if you were in an urban setting. If trees cannot be safely assessed then that is fine. Make sure you state this in your reporting.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Settle for a limited visual assessment 	
Tidal estuarine settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trapped by fast incoming tides Getting stuck in mud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible Possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call in when you start and finish Always check tide times for your area Take a second person Consider a drone survey from a safe operating point Wear hi-viz clothing Wear a life jacket Have a coast guard band radio 	<p>We sometime need to assess coastal trees. This includes trees atop cliffs or along the waters edge. Mangroves are normally left to Ecologists to assess. Conditions can change very fast in these environments – if in doubt don’t go alone.</p>
Bush settings (rural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical exhaustion Getting lost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlikely Unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take food and drink for the journey Take more regular breaks than for urban bush settings 	<p>This does not include urban bush reserve settings. See TTCC-SOP-01 for details. Jobs that require work in rural bush settings will be obvious. Plan the job appropriately.</p>
Naturally fed watercourses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapidly rising waters in rain events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abort the task in flash rain events If Heavy rain events take you by surprise stop and rethink the task – do not become isolated Remove yourself from low lying areas and water channels Identify these areas and always have an escape plan to get to higher ground Never cross swollen waterways – stay put and wait 	
Hypothermia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caught out in rain Falling into water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly unlikely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you get wet and cannot protect yourself with clothing, remove yourself from the environment. Seek shelter If you fall into water call in immediately and abort the task. Go and change 	<p>Hypothermia mostly happens at temperatures above zero. It is usually a combination of wet and wind. Hypothermia can be caused by submersion in water.</p>

