REMOTE AND ISOLATED WORK

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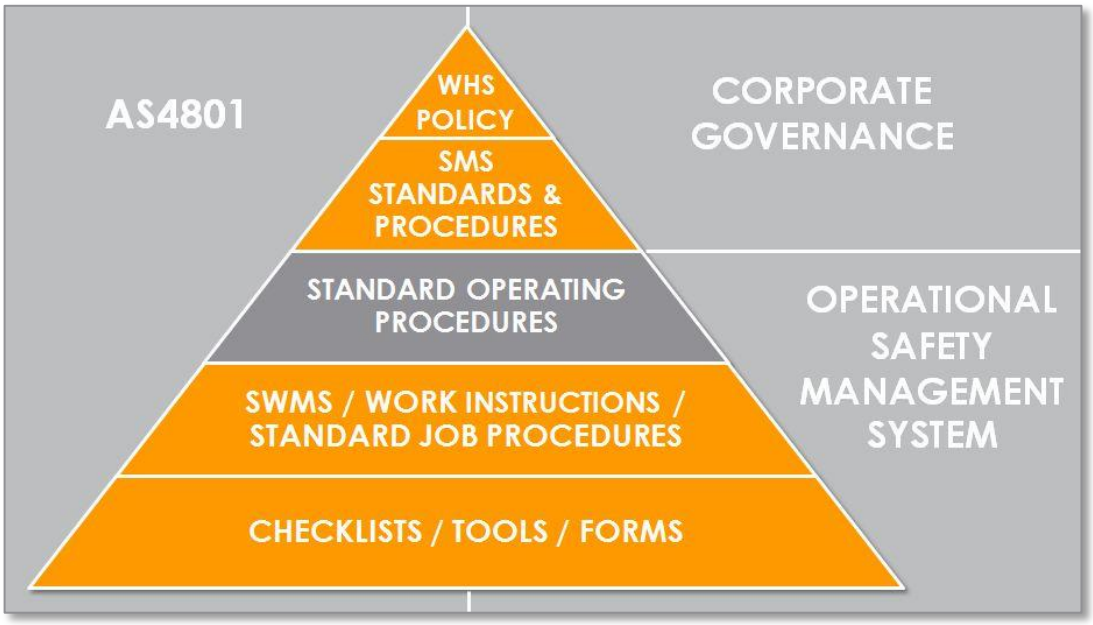
1. SMS DOCUMENT HIERARCHY



2. PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents Queensland Urban Utilities' (QUU's) approach to the management of remote and isolated work at QUU controlled workplaces.

The overall purpose of this procedure is to ensure that risks associated with remote and isolated work are adequately managed in order to minimise the risk of injury or harm to workers.

3. SCOPE

This SOP provides practical guidance on how to manage health and safety risks associated with remote and isolated work.

This procedure applies to all QUU staff, including contractors and other persons on QUU-controlled worksites.

4. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

Buddy System: Cooperative arrangements whereby individuals are paired or teamed up and assume responsibility for one another's welfare or safety.

Designated Contact: An individual who has been appointed or selected to be a primary point of contact and who is responsible to initiate and/or receive communication from the lone or remote worker.

Manager: as per QUU naming conventions, the Manager who has direct responsibility for the activity being performed or the area the activity is occurring in.

Personal Protective Equipment: anything used or worn by a person to minimise risk to the person's health and safety, including air supplied respiratory equipment.

PPE: acronym used for Personal Protective Equipment.

Remote or Isolated Work: Remote or isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical assistance and emergency services.

SMS: acronym used for QUU's Safety Management System.

Supervisor/PICOW: term used for any QUU employee who acts or is appointed as a Supervisor, Coordinator or Team Leader within QUU. A PICOW (Person in Control of Worksite) is the person designated to be in control of a workplace by QUU.

WHS: acronym used for Work Health and Safety.

Worker: employees, contractors, subcontractors, outworkers, apprentices and trainees, work experience students, volunteers and PCBUs who are individuals if they perform work for the business.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Outlined below are responsibilities specific to remote and isolated work at all QUU workplaces and controlled sites.

5.1 QUU EXECUTIVE

QUU Executive and Senior Management (CEO, ELT, General Managers – Officer and Non-Officer Appointed) are responsible for overseeing and ensuring the implementation of the requirements of this SOP and related procedures within their respective functional areas. This includes ensuring all sites are suitably risk assessed and have appropriate facilities, services and resources to ensure that risks associated with remote and isolated work are adequately managed to minimise the risk of injury or harm to workers.

5.2 MANAGERS

Managers in all operational areas and QUU worksites are responsible for ensuring the review and management of risks associated with remote and isolated work. This includes:

- Providing adequate resources to enable the effective implementation of systems to control and manage risks associated with remote and isolated work;
- Maintaining all records, including risk assessments and any documents related to the remote and isolated work;
- Ensuring all proposed remote and isolated work activities have been adequately risk assessed and that appropriate controls have been implemented before providing authorisation for the activity to commence;
- Ensuring emergency response contact numbers are communicated to remote and isolated workers;
- Communicating with Supervisors/Team Leaders to ensure training on and implementation of, remote and isolated work systems;
- Ensuring compliance with this remote and isolated work control system for all employees, contractors, projects, sites and facilities under QUU control; and
- Must ensure an approved communication system has been established that is reliable and effective.

5.3 SUPERVISORS/PICOW

Supervisors and PICOW in all operational areas and QUU worksites are responsible for ensuring that risks associated with remote and isolated work are managed, including:

- Ensuring compliance with remote and isolated work control systems for all employees, contractors, projects, sites and facilities under their control;
- Maintaining arrangements, guidelines and control measures for personnel completing remote and isolated work;
- Undertaking risk assessments of all remote and isolated work and implementing adequate control measures to reduce the risk of these activities prior to approval;
- Providing instruction about risks associated with remote and isolated work at site inductions (when appropriate).
- Must ensure an approved communication system has been established that is reliable and effective.
- Must ensure emergency response contact numbers are communicated to remote and isolated workers.

5.4 WORKERS

All workers must ensure that they:

- Follow the requirements detailed in this SOP and associated documents;
- Comply with all work control systems while undertaking any remote or isolated work;
- Communicate with relevant supervisors/PICOW before undertaking any remote and isolated work, and seek approval as outlined in this SOP and associated documents;
- Carry emergency contact details when completing any remote or isolated work;
- Wear, when required, and in the manner instructed, the appropriate PPE supplied;
- Report any incidents/injuries immediately to their supervisor; and complete a QUU WHS Incident Report (in Q-Pulse) in accordance with QUU WHS incident reporting procedures;
- Set an alarm ensure they are aware that the agreed time for contact has been reached;
- Lodge an incident report in QPulse for any Lone Worker incident or false alarm;

5.5 DESIGNATED CONTACT

All designated contacts must ensure that they:

- Are available and contactable by the agreed communication method at all times during the completion of agreed activities;
- Are competent in and aware of any emergency response procedures in the event of an incident or injury;
- Report any deviations from the original agreed and approved process;
- Report any failures to check in immediately;
- Activate emergency response procedures immediately if required.

5.6 CONTRACTORS

At all times when performing work on a QUU site or for/on behalf of QUU, contractors must comply with QUU's remote and isolated work requirements detailed in this and related procedures, and must report any remote or isolated work-related incidents to the relevant QUU Manager and to their employing/contracting agency in accordance with QUU WHS Incident Reporting Procedures.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- WHS Consultation and Communication Procedure (PRO361)
- WHS Hazard and Risk Management Procedure (PRO363)
- WHS Incident Reporting, Investigation and Escalation Procedure (PRO364)
- WHS Documentation Data Control & Record Management Procedure (PRO362)
- QUU Facilities SOP (PRO438)
- QUU WHS Plant SOP (PRO386)
- Lone and Remote Work Risk Assessment Form (FOR552)

7. PROCEDURE

Remote and isolated work tasks create additional risks in the event of an incident due to potential delays in the provision of assistance or emergency response.

QUU will take action to manage their facilities, plant, work environment and tasks as to eliminate the risks associated with remote and isolated work activities at their worksites, and if that is not possible, QUU will minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

To manage the risks associated with remote and isolated work activities at QUU worksites, QUU will:

- Identify and assess the risk for all remote and isolated work tasks that could cause injury or damage;
- Supply and maintain suitable plant and equipment for workers to reduce the likelihood of a remote and isolated work-related incident;
- Provide instruction in safe remote and isolated work practices to workers;
- Educate workers in the risks of remote and isolated work and the controls required for managing remote and isolated work activities; and
- Develop and test emergency response, rescue and first aid plans.

Refer to the WHS Hazard and Risk Management Procedure (PRO363) for further guidance on QUU's risk management process.

7.1 REMOTE AND ISOLATED WORK

Remote or isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance from other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical assistance and emergency services.

A worker may be isolated even if other people may be close by, for example, an office worker working by themselves after normal hours in an office building. In other cases, a worker may be far away from populated areas, for example, carrying out field work alone.

In some situations, a worker may be alone for a short time. In other situations, the worker may be on their own in remote locations for more than one shift.

Working alone or remotely increases the risk of any job. Poor access to emergency assistance and exposure to violence are the main hazards that increase the risk of remote or isolated work.

7.2 RISK ASSESSMENT

A risk assessment must be completed before any remote or isolated work can commence to ensure that all potential risks are identified and adequately controlled, using the Lone and Remote Work Risk Assessment Form (FOR552). The following factors must be considered when assessing the risks involved with remote or isolated work:

FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN ASSESSING RISKS OF REMOTE/ISOLATED WORK	
THE LENGTH OF TIME THE WORKER MAY BE WORKING ALONE	▪ How long does the worker need to be alone to finish the job?
THE TIME OF DAY WHEN A WORKER MAY BE WORKING ALONE	▪ Is there an increased risk at certain times of day? (e.g. working at night may pose a greater risk of exposure to violence)
COMMUNICATION	▪ What forms of communication does the worker have access to? ▪ Are there procedures for regular contact with the worker? ▪ Will the emergency communication system work properly in all situations? ▪ If communication systems are vehicle-based, what arrangements are there to cover the worker when they are away from the vehicle?

THE LOCATION OF THE WORK	▪ How long does the worker need to be alone to finish the job? ▪ What is likely to happen if there is a vehicle breakdown?
THE NATURE OF THE WORK	▪ What machinery, tools and equipment may be used? ▪ Are high risk activities involved? (e.g. work at heights, work with electricity/hazardous chemicals/ plant) ▪ Is fatigue likely to increase risk? (e.g. work with long hours driving a vehicle or operating machinery) ▪ Is there an increased risk of violence or aggression when workers have to deal with clients or customers by themselves? ▪ Can environmental factors affect the safety of the worker? (e.g. exposure to extreme heat or cold environments) ▪ Is there risk of attack by an animal (including insects)?
THE CAPABILITIES OF THE WORKER	▪ Are you aware of a pre-existing medical condition that may increase risk?

Once the risks associated with remote/isolated work have been identified, appropriate controls measures must be implemented before authorisation for the work to commence can be considered. Example control measures for consideration include:

EXAMPLE CONTROL MEASURES FOR REMOTE/ISOLATED WORK	
BUDDY SYSTEM	▪ Some jobs present such a risk that workers should not work alone.
COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS	▪ The type of communication system chosen will depend on the distance from the base and the environment where the worker will be located or travelling through. ▪ Expert advice and local knowledge may be needed to assist with the selection of an effective communication system. ▪ If a worker is working alone in a workplace that has a phone, communication via the phone is adequate, provided that the worker is able to reach the phone in an emergency. ▪ In situations where a communication is not available, (mobile network blackspot) a method of communication that allows a worker to call for help in the event of an emergency at any time must be chosen. Examples include: – The QUU Adhoc Lone Worker process ▪ Mobile phones cannot be relied on as an effective method of communication in many locations. Coverage in the area that the remote or

	isolated worker will work must be confirmed before work commences.
MOVEMENT RECORDS	▪ Knowing where a worker is meant to be assists in controlling the risks of remote and isolated work. For example, call-in systems with agreed times and satellite tracking systems in vehicles can be used to monitor movements of remote and isolated workers.
TRAINING, INFORMATION & INSTRUCTION	▪ Training must be provided to workers before commencing any remote or isolated work activities. ▪ Workers must be competent in the emergency response procedures in the event of an incident or injury, the use of communication systems, driving off-road or bush survival and administering first aid.

7.2.1 LONE AND REMOTE WORK DEVICE

Workers required to perform tasks alone or in remote or isolated locations must, where the Adhoc call in/out process is not assessed as practicable, must use the current QUU IT solution, where applicable.

7.2.2 COMMUNICATION

An agreed communication process must be available at all times with a remote or isolated worker.

One or more of the following methods for monitoring the condition of the remote or isolated work must be used, and the responsible manager must ensure this is documented in the risk assessment.

- Regular contact by telephone or other agreed method.

The remote or isolated worker must contact the main office, depot or designated contact when he/she:

- Has arrived on site
- Has completed the task(s) allocated and when he/she is due to leave isolated area and return to the depot/work area.
- Realises that the expected completion time of the task has to be extended;
- Experiences any unexpected difficulties or emergency situation at the site;
- Is due to contact the main office, depot or contact point in accordance with the frequency of scheduled communication defined within the established risk assessment; and
- Is entering an area in which the mobile phone network is not available.

Managers/Supervisors are responsible for remote and isolated workers must ensure an approved communication system has been established that is reliable and effective. The communication system must detail:

- The contact person;
- The regular time intervals for contact; and
- The preferred form of communication.

7.2.3 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Before any remote or isolated work can commence, an Emergency Response Plan must be prepared in consultation with the supervisor and the remote/isolated worker.

The Emergency Response Plan must include actions to take if the lone or remote worker has failed to make scheduled regular communication as agreed, or has not returned at the nominated time.

The remote or isolated worker must be competent and aware of any emergency response procedures in the event of an incident or injury.

Managers/Supervisors must ensure emergency response contact numbers are communicated to remote and isolated workers, and remote and isolated workers must carry specified contact details with them.

If contact with the remote or isolated worker cannot be established, or an emergency situation has occurred, the relevant Emergency Response Plan must be commenced immediately.

7.2.4 RECORDS

The responsible supervisor must retain all records pertaining to remote and isolated work, including risk assessments, and stored as per WHS Documentation Data Control & Record Management Procedure (PRO362).

8. TRAINING, COMPETENCY AND SUPERVISION

Before commencing any remote or isolated work, workers must be competent in performing the tasks under the conditions they will be exposed to.

QUU will provide instruction to workers on:

- Hazards associated with remote and isolated work;
- The safe use of QUU remote or isolated work equipment and
- Emergency procedures related to remote or isolated work.

9. REFERENCES

The following references contain information used in the preparation and development of this SOP:

- *Queensland Work Health and Safety Act 2011*.
- *Queensland Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011*.
- *Managing the Work Environment and Facilities Code of Practice 2011*.

10. REVIEW

The Remote and Isolated Work SOP is to be reviewed every 2 years or earlier if:

- There is an identified risk to business;
- A significant safety or serious injury event occurs;
- Incident investigation or audit results show that application of the standard fails to deliver the required outcomes;
- There are changes in associated legislation; or
- There is evidence that the standard is not having a positive impact on safety-related KPIs.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, contact your Health and Safety Representative or the QUU Safety Team.