

## Procedure: Working without Support Systems

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### 1. Purpose

Provide a safe working environment by ensuring workers have effective support systems and processes in place.

### 2. Actions Required

- Identify areas where work is conducted alone or in isolation
- Implement effective control measures
- Review and audit

### 3. Definitions

**GSCC RO** - GSCC Responsible Officer, a Greater Shepparton City Council employee, who in their area of responsibility has a managerial or supervisory role or has engaged a contractor(s)

**SWMS** - Safe Work Method Statement

**WORKERS** - Employees, Contractors, Volunteers and any person performing duties

**WORKING ALONE OR ISOLATION** - Circumstances, where assistance, for any reason, would not be readily available to a worker or group of workers.

### 4. Responsibility and Authority

#### Directors

- Ensure workers have effective support systems when performing duties
- Delegate appropriate OHS responsibilities and accountabilities to all levels of management
- Ensure adequate consultation with employees regarding health and safety issues.

#### Managers, Team Leaders and Supervisors

- Consider availability of support and emergency personnel to workers performing their duties
- Risk assess tasks performed to identify areas where workers may be without effective support systems
- Develop safe work method statements
- Ensure that risk control measures are effective
- Ensure adequate consultation with employees regarding health and safety issues.

#### Workers

- Take reasonable care for own safety and that of others at work
- Obey all instructions from their Supervisors issued to protect their own personal health and safety and that of others
- Report any hazards

### 5. Procedure

#### What Is Working Without Support Systems?

Working without support systems can include a worker in an office building or Local Laws officer working in bushland.

Isolation can refer to circumstances, where workers are unable to get immediate assistance due to:

- Time of day
- Location
- Nature of the work

- An incident or injury

### Assessment

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when other circumstances occur. Whether a situation is a high or low risk will depend on the location, type of work, interaction with the public, or the consequences of an emergency, accident, injury, etc.

GSCC RO's should assess each situation individually and consult with workers. Considerations that should be assessed include:

- Length of time the worker will be alone
- Means of medical assistance (especially if worker is incapacitated)
- Means of communication
- Equipment being used
- Location of the work
- Type or nature of work
- Is there possibility of abuse or violence?
- Is fatigue likely to be a factor?
- Does the work involve working with money or other valuables?
- Is there risk of an animal attack, insect bite (poisonous or allergic reaction)?
- Are there any pre-existing medical conditions that may increase the risk to the worker?
- If the worker is locked in a building, how will emergency services be able to get in? (For example: a night cleaner in a secure office building).
- Manual Handling risks

Refer: M12/14231 Violence Assessment Form (Attachment 1)

Some individual workers are required to perform their duties in early hours due to being "on Call". GSCC RO's must ensure workers have an adequate and reliable system of support. A risk assessment of this work should consider:

- If the task is too hazardous to be done after hours?
- How can the worker be contacted and how can the worker contact someone if:
  - It is early morning or late at night
  - They have been injured or suffer a medical emergency
- The time of day, potential hazards and visibility
- Should the work be done by multiple workers?
- Can a scene be barricaded and workers return in better conditions?
- The necessary system of support must include:
  - Ability to communicate with the worker
  - Ability of worker to contact emergency assistance
  - Ability to locate the worker if required.

### Control Methods

A mobile phone by itself may not be adequate, if a worker becomes injured and unable to gain emergency assistance. More than one solution may be required to ensure an **effective and appropriate** control method for workers required to work in isolation. The use of a mobile phone together with a "check in/checkout" system may prove effective especially where hazards and

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risks are considered low. A duress alarm system that has security centre back up may be a solution where the chance of injury or assault is higher or more remote.

**Buddy system** – Some jobs present a high level of risk that employees should not be required to do the work alone, such as tasks where violence has occurred before.

**Environmental design** – Workplaces and their surrounds can be designed to reduce the likelihood of violent attacks by:

- Controlling access, installing effective barriers
- Placement of furniture and benches in meeting rooms
- Increased visibility
- Use of alarms

#### **Electronic equipment**

- Alarms – Duress alarms can notify authorities or set off procedures in case of workplace emergencies, these can be within a building or carried on an individual
- Communication devices-This can include devices such as mobile phones, pages or loud buzzers

Electronic devices are most effective for the man down or duress systems as they often include the ability to locate an employee in distress through use of GPS technology. This may often concern employees as it is considered a way of “tracking” employee movements. Some duress systems provide location information to others, only when a duress device has been activated.

#### **Administrative**

- Movement records – “Check in/Checkout” system, knowing where employees are expected to be can assist in managing risks. Examples are call in systems with supervisors
- Training and education – Employees who deal with potentially violent clients alone need appropriate training. Employees in remote locations also need training in first aid
- Scheduling- Where possible schedule higher risk tasks to be done during normal business hours, or when another worker capable of helping in an emergency is present. Avoid hazardous work when alone or at times where support is at a minimum.

Controls are to be included in work group SWMS.

## **6. References**

- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* Section 21(1) Provision of a safe working environment
- Work safe Victoria – Working Alone – Identifying & Addressing the risks publication

## **7. Supporting Procedures and Documents**

- M11/1422: Workplace safety hazard identification checklist comprehensive
- M10/109360: Hazard Identification, Risk assessment, Control & Reporting
- M12/14231 Violence Assessment Form (Attachment 1)

Attachment 1 (For complete form refer Trim)

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## Workplace Threat assessment form

This form is designed to assist with the assessment and implement of actions to eliminate or reduce the potential risks of violence associated with the activities carried within work locations.

It is recommended that this form be completed by involving workers, management and HSR's.

**Work Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 1:**

1. Describe the types of activities carried out by employees at the location.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 2:**

**History:**

2. Have there been incidents when employees at your work location experienced threats or have been threatened verbally or physically?

No  Yes. **(Describe incidents such as: client on employee; employee on employee; employee on public, etc.)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Part 3:**

**From the activities which might expose employees to risk of violence:**

3. Do employees at your work location work with money or other valuables?

No  Yes. Provide details

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do employees at your work location deal with people who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs?

No  Yes. Provide details

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. Do employees at your work location deal with people who regularly "act out"?

No  Yes. Provide details

\_\_\_\_\_  
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