

ETU OHS REPS NEWSLETTER



About working alone

Working alone can increase the likelihood of some workplace hazards or risks occurring. And when incidents occur, the consequences can be more severe when people work alone.

'Working alone' is working anywhere a person is unable to get immediate assistance from colleagues or other people. In some cases other people may be close by, such as a cleaner working by themselves in a city office building. In other cases the employee could be in a remote location, such as a researcher undertaking field work by themselves in a national park.

Exposure to violence and poor access to emergency assistance are the two main hazards of working alone. However, these hazards can also be faced by people who work with colleagues.

Because there are no hazards which are exclusive to working alone, the hazards and risks of the particular job need to be dealt with first. However, working alone does increase the risks of any given job.

Working alone can increase the likelihood of the hazard or risk. For example, an attendant working alone late at night in a 24-hour convenience store may be a greater target for exposure to violence.

Working alone can also increase the severity of workplace injuries. A park ranger who is bitten by a snake has an increased chance of severe consequences if they are working alone rather than with colleagues who can help.

In most workplaces a combination of solutions is needed to manage the risks of working alone (e.g. combine two techniques such as establishing mobile phone contact with a person as well as ensuring staff are trained to deal with aggressive clients). Some possible solutions include:

Buddy system

Some jobs present such a high level of risk that employees should not be required to do the work alone. Occupations with a high risk of violence fall into this category (e.g. money collection).

Environmental design

Workplaces and their surrounds can be designed to reduce the likelihood of violence. Environmental design features include:

- controlling access through installing effective barriers
- set ups in client consultation rooms
- increased visibility
- CCTV.

Design solutions need to be tailored to the specific workplace.

Communication or location systems

Systems that can quickly locate employees or enable quick communication will help in directing assistance. The [Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007](#)(section 3.4.16) require employers to maintain continuous communication with employees working in the isolated environment of a [confined space](#). Mine operators must also have means for constant communication with an employees who are working alone at an isolated location at a mine.

Some examples of communication or location systems are mobile or radio communications and global positioning systems (GPSs). The technology selected must always be supported by the Infrastructure (eg not all rural areas have adequate coverage for all mobile phone technologies).

Alarms such as panic buttons can also notify authorities of workplace emergencies.

Movement records

Knowing where employees are expected to be can assist in managing risks. Examples are call in systems with supervisors or colleagues or using whiteboards at a base.

Training

Employees who deal with potentially violent clients alone need appropriate training. Employees in remote locations also need training in first aid.

HIRE EQUIPMENT

It is the responsibility of the hirer to give adequate information to each person to whom the hirer supplies the plant in relation to the purpose for which the plant is designed and any conditions necessary to ensure that the plant is safe and without risks to health if used for the purpose for which it was designed.

Example, the person that the hirer is supplying is a contractor that employs a number of workers, the hirer has an obligation to provide information as required to the contractor.

The contractor must ensure that the employees that will be using the hire equipment and any person supervising the employees, are trained and provided with information, instruction and training in the safety procedures associated with the use of the plant.

The OHS Act Section 30 in part requires;

A person who supplies plant or a substance who knows, or ought reasonably to know, that the plant or substance is to be used at a workplace must—

ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that it is safe and without risks to health if it is used for a purpose for which it was designed, manufactured or supplied;

give adequate information to each person to whom the supplier supplies the plant or substance —

and on request, give such information to a person who uses or is to use the plant or substance.

The OHS Regulations, Part 2.1 – General Duties, 2.1.2 Provision of information, instruction and training, in part requires;

an employer to control any particular risk, the employer must provide each employee of

the employer who may be exposed to the risk with sufficient information, instruction and training in relation to the following matters as are necessary to enable the employee to perform his or her work in a manner that is safe and without risks to health—

the nature of the hazard giving rise to the risk; and

the need for, and the proper use and maintenance of, measures to control the risk.

Part 3.5 – Plant, Subdivision 2 – Control of Risk – generally, 3.5.23 Hazard identification, state that;

Subject to sub-regulation (2), an employer must, so far as is reasonably practicable, identify all hazards to health and safety associated with the installation, commissioning, decommissioning, dismantling, erection and use of plant and the systems of work associated with that plant.

Part 3.5 – Plant, 3.5.45 Information, instruction and training, in part requires;

The employer must ensure that employees likely to be exposed to the risk, and any person supervising the employees, are trained and provided with information and instruction in—

the processes used for hazard identification and control of risk; and

the safety procedures associated with the use of the plant at the workplace; and

the use, fit, testing and storage of personal protective equipment, if personal protective equipment forms part of the risk control measures.

2008 Calendar

EEIT OHS TRAINING DATES

10AM –12PM

Melbourne—

Held at old ETU Office

Swanston St Carlton South

29th October

OHS REP TRAINING

Contact Tanya—0393269377 to book into the courses below.

Initial 5 Day OHS REPS Course

1 Day Refresher OHS Rep Course

Melbourne

Country

Mildura—26th November

ANNUAL OHS REPS

CONFERENCE

Thursday 30th October 2008

For further information and to download the registration form go to:

http://www.ohsrep.org.au/storage/documents/2008confReg_LR.pdf