

# SESLHD POLICY COVER SHEET



**Health**  
South Eastern Sydney  
Local Health District

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| <b>NAME OF DOCUMENT</b>                                    | Work Health and Safety - Working Onsite Alone or In Isolation Procedure   |
| <b>TYPE OF DOCUMENT</b>                                    | Procedure   |
| <b>DOCUMENT NUMBER</b>                                     | SESLHDPR/323  |
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| <b>RISK RATING</b>   | Medium  |
| <b>LEVEL OF EVIDENCE</b>                                   | National Standard 1<br>Local Business Rules (LBR) and Risk Assessments  |
| <b>REVIEW DATE</b>   | November 2019   |
| <b>FORMER REFERENCE(S)</b>                                 | SESLHNPD/74   |
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| <b>KEY TERMS</b>   | WHS Risk Management; Working in isolation; Working Alone  |
| <b>SUMMARY</b>   | This procedure is to assist departments/services in identifying and controlling risks to staff safety when working onsite alone and in isolation. |

## **COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY**

**This Procedure is intellectual property of South Eastern Sydney Local Health District.  
Procedure content cannot be duplicated.**

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

This procedure has been developed to promote safety and maximise the wellbeing of all workers when working onsite either in isolation or alone. Workers who work offsite or travelling between locations whether alone or in groups are to refer to [SESLHDPR/230 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management for Staff Working Off Site Procedure](#).

## 2. AIMS

Workers that work alone anywhere onsite within a premises or campus under control of the SESLHD who are unable to get immediate assistance from colleagues or other people may face a number of additional risks to their health and safety. This includes working in isolated areas onsite either during or outside their usual rostered working hours.

The overall aim of the procedure is to help the department manager in consultation with workers to implement a range of controls to minimise the risk to those required to work alone.

The procedure provides generic information due to the broad range of services and locations that workers may work, alone and in isolation and predominately covers risk identification and control.

## 3. TARGET AUDIENCE

This procedure is designed to assist managers and their workers who are involved in working onsite either in isolation or alone.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 **Workers will:** provide input and follow the safety rules outlined within their departments Local Business Rule for working alone.
- 4.2 **Managers will:** implement and comply with WHS and IM procedures, including consultation and development of Local Business Rules for their staff working alone.
- 4.3 **Sector Managers/ Service Managers will:** Assist Managers in the implementation of Local Business Rules where these require wider consultation or support from other departments.
- 4.4 **Chief Executive will:** ensure WHS and IM procedures are in place to achieve our WHS objectives.

For further detail, refer to:

[SESLHDPR/212 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management Procedure](#)

[SESLHDPR/271 Work Health and Safety - Statement of Commitment Procedure and Poster](#)

- 4.5 **Contact Person:** Is an identified point of contact to take emergency or distress calls, initiate contact with overdue staff, initiate emergency response and notify the Manager/Team Leader of overdue staff within a set timeframe.
- 4.6 **Contractors** – are to comply with [SESLHDPR/333 Work Health and Safety - Contractor Management Procedure](#) and [SESLHDHB/021 Work Health and Safety - Contractor Safety Handbook](#).
- 4.7 **Site Managers** – will be responsible for implementing their facilities system for monitoring staff working alone.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

**Contact Person:** refers to the nominated contact person/position that is the contact for emergencies relating to the staff member's safety while working alone in isolation.

**Duress Alarm:** fixed or pendant (portable) style device to signal for assistance sent by a person(s) who is threatened by the situation they face.

**High Risk tasks** when working alone may include but are not limited to working with:

- Electrical systems
- Mental health clients
- Public reception areas
- Handling moneys, drugs, chemicals, bio hazards etc
- Confined spaces or difficult to reach areas
- Heights
- Heavy machinery

**Manager:** refers to the supervisor in a Service i.e. In-charge person, Team Leader, Nursing Unit Manager, Department Manager, persons acting in a supervisors role.

**Security Staff:** Security Officers or Health and Security Assistant

**Working Alone (onsite):** Working anywhere onsite/premise/campus under control of the LHD where a person is unable to get immediate assistance from colleagues or other people. This includes working in isolated areas onsite either during or outside normal working hours.

**Working offsite:** for staff working offsite (alone) refer to [SESLHDPR/230 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management for Staff Working Offsite Procedure](#)

## 6. PROCEDURE

To enable workers to undertake their duties and provide services, the manager is to apply the following risk management principles to all their department/services where workers are required to work alone in isolation –

1. Identify all of the department's high risk working alone and in isolation tasks through consultation with workers, which may also include advice from, Work health and Safety Committees, WH&S Consultants, professional experts, industrial organisations and or regulatory authorities with regards to appropriate risk controls that are to be implemented.
2. Development of local [Safe Work Procedure](#) (SWP) in consultation with workers for the specific task outlining the risk controls and action to be taken by workers should an incident or safety issue occur
3. Action plan to be developed for the implementation of outstanding controls
4. Outstanding tasks from action plans are to be added to the department [WHS Hazard Register](#) or ERMS for long term actions.
5. Monitoring and evaluation of SWP and risk controls
6. Develop Local Business Rules around emergency communication including in and out of business hours arrangements.

### 6.1 Risk Assessment

Where a high risk task has been identified which involves working alone in isolation a risk assessment is to be conducted.

[Appendix 1 - Working Alone Risk Assessment Resource](#) has been developed to assist in flagging potential risks that may need to be managed.

The risk assessment will help to identify specific risks which may be applicable to staff outside normal working hours, e.g. low light conditions, availability of campus security personnel.

The risk assessment is to be reviewed at minimum of every three years or when any changes to the task occur (whichever is first).

### 6.2 Risk Controls

Not all controls will be suitable or appropriate for each department/service however [Appendix 2 - Risk Control Guide](#) provides a range of risk control options for consideration.

### 6.3 Local Business Rules

Consultation with the Site Manager will help identify if the facility or service already have procedures in place for monitoring of workers working alone in isolation. These procedures may have been developed for tasks such as after-hours site access, and should be incorporated into the local SWP and Local Business Rule (LBR).

If the site does not have current procedures in place for monitoring of workers working alone in isolation, you will need to develop specific SWP's for your department or service.

Site Manager and Managers of other workers that may be required to respond and assist are to be included in the consultation process.

### **Content of Local Business Rule**

LBRs are to include:

- Contact details for the nominated contact person (both either in or outside the department's normal business hours if applicable).
- The system used to monitor staff working alone
- Communication methods and relevant contact phone numbers
- A process for notifying the contact person if the staff member has had to make early withdrawal of services
- Local emergency escalation plan that is to be implemented if attempts to contact the staff member have been unsuccessful (may include steps such as alerts to senior management, security personnel or NSW Police)
- How the person in the role of contact person or point, is to be orientated and training in the procedures regarding their roles and responsibilities

Where a department does not already have a system in place to monitor workers working alone, they should use Form – Working alone in isolation Log.

## **6.4 Emergency Escalation Plan**

Incident response procedures must be in place in the event of an emergency where the contact person or contact point is notified of a distressed worker or when communication with the worker is not maintained as per agreed procedure.

The local emergency escalation plan will need to have defined points of escalation and accountabilities need to be signed off by all respective stakeholders ( i.e. Switch Board, Security Staff, Site Executive and or Senior Nurse Manager After hours) and be routinely tested to ensure consistency and reliability of processes.

Consideration should be given to including a specific coded safety word that a staff member can use to indicate being kidnapped or detained against their will to the contact person or point.

## **6.5 Testing Of Emergency Procedures, Systems and Equipment**

All emergency response and communication equipment (i.e. - two way radios, mobile phones, pagers, and duress alarm points) must be tested in the location it is intended to be used.

This is to ensure they work in the location and that there are no communication black spots.

Equipment that is provided for workers to use while working alone in isolation must be tested on a regular basis in line with sites' testing schedule. Where applicable testing should be added to the local workplace inspections [WHS Regular Workplace Inspection Checklist](#).

## **6.6 Generic Job Steps**

[Appendix 3 - Generic Job Steps](#) is a guide for some specific working alone tasks. These may need to be included in the development of your SWP or LBR.

## 6.7 Consultation and escalation

The manager in consultation with affected workers must ensure that the risk control measures are implemented in a timely manner. Where the preferred measures cannot be implemented within a suitable timeframe (considering the level of risk), interim measures must be put in place to control the risk until the preferred risk controls can be implemented.

Where the manager and/or workers are not satisfied that the mitigation strategies will be effective in controlling the risks, this will require escalation in a timely manner to the appropriate senior manager for actioning as per [SESLHDPR/212 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management Procedure](#).

## 6.8 Education and Training

All managers must ensure that workers who work alone in isolation have information, instruction and training with regards to the risks and SWP. This education and any necessary training must be incorporated into the induction process and formal performance review for new and existing workers.

Training records are to be kept and maintained by the Manager [Department Training Register](#) and regular testing of emergency procedures should be incorporated in to routine audit procedures for all local departments [WHS Regular Workplace Inspection Checklist](#).

## 7. DOCUMENTATION

- [Form F131 - Safe Work Procedure](#)
- [Form F132 - Safety Rules](#)
- [Form F118 - WHS Hazard Register](#)
- [Form F038 - Generic Risk Assessment](#)
- [Form F129 - Department Training Register](#)
- [Form F127 - WHS Regular Workplace Inspection Checklist](#)
- [Form F001- Working on site alone in isolation log](#)

## 8. AUDIT

The achievement of an effective working alone and in isolation guideline:

- Use of the procedure will be accessed via OHS and IM Profile audits every two years
- Implementation of local procedures will be evidenced by availability of local or departmental procedures, [WHS Regular Workplace Inspection Checklist](#) and [Department Training Register](#)

## 9. REFERENCES

### 9.1 External

- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 No 10](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#)

**Ministry of Health**

- [PD2013\\_050 - Policy Directive, Work Health and Safety: Better Practice Procedures](#)
- [PD2012\\_008 - Policy Directive, Violence Prevention & Management Training Framework for the NSW Public Health System](#)
- [IB2013\\_024 – Information Bulletin, Protecting People and Property - NSW Health Policy and Standards for Security Risk Management](#)
- [PD2016\\_017 - Policy Directive, Work Health and Safety Audits](#)

**9.2 Internal**

- [SESLHDPR/212 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management Procedure](#)
- [SESLHDPR/342 Work Health and Safety – Development of Safe Work Practices Procedure](#)
- [SESLHDHB/016 Work Health and Safety - Safety When Working Offsite Handbook](#)
- [SESLHDPR/230 Work Health and Safety - Risk Management for Staff Working Off Site Procedure](#)

**10. REVISION & APPROVAL HISTORY**

| Date          | Revision No. | Author and Approval   |
|---------------|--------------|---|
| February 2014 | 2            | Revised by Peter Kuszelyk,<br>WHS Officer<br>Work, Health, Safety & Wellbeing |
| August 2017   | 3            | Desktop Revision and Links Update - John Parkinson, WHS Consultant            |
| October 2017  | 3            | Updates endorsed by Executive Sponsor   |



**Appendix 1**

**Working Alone Risk Assessment Resource**

This resource is to be used to help assess a range of risks and controls that may need to be addressed for a worker who is working onsite but is work alone and in isolation.

Where a **No** answer is indicated, a control should be implemented in the Safe Work Procedure to manage the risk or issue

| <b>RISK / SAFETY ISSUES</b>   | <b>Controls in place</b>   |
|---|--|
| Can safe access/egress be provided for the lone worker?   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Is there adequate lighting both internal and external and is it working?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Is access to the workplace restricted to prevent unauthorised entry   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Has a chemical risk assessment been conducted for each chemical used?   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Can the equipment be used safely by the lone worker?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Has a first aid risk assessment been conducted?   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Can appropriate first aid be provided to the lone worker based on the first aid risk assessment?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Is an appropriate communication system in place to allow the worker to communicate with their manager or nominated contact person?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Is there clear easily accessible information on the Emergency Procedure?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Has the worker received appropriate training and instruction specific to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risks associated with the plant and tasks</li> <li>• Escort procedures for staff working alone after hours</li> <li>• Use of the communication system</li> <li>• Use of duress alarms</li> <li>• Use of the emergency spill kit</li> <li>• The local emergency procedures</li> </ul> | Yes / No / N/A<br>Yes / No / N/A<br>Yes / No / N/A<br>Yes / No / N/A<br>Yes / No / N/A<br>Yes / No / N/A |
| Are contact details of the nominated contact person included in Safe Work Procedure (SWP)?  | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Is testing of emergency equipment included in the Local Business Rule and or the SWP?   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Has a risk assessment been completed for high risk equipment used by the lone worker?   | Yes / No / N/A   |
| Will it take less than 5 minutes to respond to a duress/emergency call made by the worker in isolation?   | Yes / No / N/A   |



**Appendix 2 - Risk Control Guide*****Engineering Controls***

- Minimising security risks by utilising building design principles ie “ staff only areas”
- Installing physical and symbolic barriers including security glass or metal screens to protect workers
- Moving worker to a location where they can be seen and interact with others
- Installing video intercoms at entrances
- Installing door and perimeter alarms
- Installation of fixed and/or personal duress alarms “man down” system
- Introducing technological systems and processes to assist with worker safety
- Use of communication devices such as mobile telephones or two way radios (only where they have been tested in the location and no communication black spots have been identified).

***Administrative Controls***

- Providing training to workers in the developed Safe Work Procedure (SWP) and Zero Tolerance
- Development of Local Emergency Procedures
- Development of a system to identify who is in the department outside of their regular/normal work hours
- Developing a system to ensure when a worker is about to be left alone in a work area, they are notified so they can implement the local procedures.
- Workers displaying their ID cards to verify authorisation to be on site
- Developing or changing work practices, business rules or service agreements to reduce the number of staff who work alone in isolation
- Developing local arrangements for escorts to car parks or vehicles after dark.
- Developing access and key control procedures
- Developing treatment and management protocols for violent patients
- Rearranging tasks, activities or staffing to address when performing high risk tasks (e.g. meal break timetabling).

**Appendix 3 - Generic Job Steps*****Working Alone Internal to Department or Area***

- Ensure as worker leave the work area, the last person is reminded to implement local procedures
- Where fitted the worker is to wear/carry their portable duress alarm
- Notify contact persons at the commencement of duty that worker will be working alone
- Provide contact person with location, estimated time they will complete work and a contact telephone number
- Ensure the workplace is secure by checking windows and doors etc
- If possible, available local duress alarms should be used if an accident or incident occurs. Portable communication devices may be made available
- Immediately report to contact person any concerns and or retreat to a safer environment
- Contact person will record the location, name, date, commencement and expected finish time in a log or register
- Contact person should arrange regular patrols or checks on the staff member and log these checks
- Notify contact person when leaving the work area and ensure the work area is secured

***Leaving a Secure or Isolated Internal Department Area***

- Notify contact person when leaving the work area and ensure the work area is secured by locking all access points, doors, windows an/ or activating any other security controls i.e. intruder alarm
- Workers should consider requesting an escort (if working in an outlying or isolated area)
- Where possible, arrangements for escorts should be planned with department manager and or other persons to assist with the escort. If a planned escort is unavailable, the expected time of availability be advised or organise an alternative escort (i.e. – monitoring via CCTV coverage)
- Contact person will record the finish time of the worker in the log or register
- Contact person will immediately report any abnormalities or concerns to the afterhours site manager