WORKING IN ISOLATION POLICY

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Relevant delegations	
Responsible Directorate	WHS/HR
Responsible officer	WHS/Risk officer

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Overview

The Brewarrina Shire Council has legislative and regulatory responsibilities under the WHS Act 2011 and the WHS Regulations 2011 to ensure, where reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers associated with operations. This policy and accompanying procedure outline Councils commitment to managing the risks presented to workers who work, or may be required to work in isolation.

Applicability

This policy applies to workers at Council who, during their normal undertakings on behalf of Council, are required to work in isolation.

Policy Statement

The Brewarrina Shire Councils Local Government Area (LGA) spans approximately 20,000 square kilometres, with workers often required to work substantial distances away from the town of Brewarrina.

An isolated worker is a Brewarrina Shire Council worker who is required to work alone and unsupervised, in areas where physical contact with other personnel and/or access to emergency services is limited or restricted.

The risk of injury or harm to workers working in isolation may be increased because of difficulties in accessing work or emergency services when they are required. Emergency situations may arise because of the sudden onset of a medical condition, accidental work related injury, mechanical breakdown, and exposure to the elements, adverse weather conditions or an attack by an animal, insect, reptile or poisonous creature.

The accompanying procedure on Working in Isolation outlines the risk management approach to working in isolation, designated responsibilities and the controls that have been implemented to minimize the associated risks.

Working in Isolation Procedure

Who is an isolated worker?

An isolated worker is a Brewarrina Shire Council worker who is required to work alone and unsupervised, in areas where physical contact with other personnel and/or access to emergency services is limited or restricted.

Examples of isolated workers at Council can include, but are not limited to:

- Water operators
- Ranger
- Weeds Officers
- Roads Overseer
- RMCC Supervisor
- Highway Patrolman
- Truck Drivers
- Gravel Pit Operators
- Plant operators (grader)

Assessing Risks

When Council requires one of their workers to work in isolation the task must be risk assessed. This assessment must be done in consultation between the worker and immediate supervisor or manager. During the consultation process a working in isolation program will be developed and documented.

This program can be specific to an individual task or a period of time if the task is to be carried out on a regular basis.

Risks associated with a particular task are to be assessed and rated on the basis of HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW and control measures including communication tools and reporting times implemented as necessary.

Responsibilities

Managers/Supervisors must:

- Ensure that full risk assessments have been conducted for tasks that subject a worker to working in isolation and that appropriate control measures have been implemented prior to the commencement of work.
- Regularly monitor and review the risk assessments to ensure their adequacy and relevance
- Actively encourage staff to take ownership or their personal safety and security
- Identify appropriate training needs for their staff

Workers must:

- Adhere to the Working in Isolation procedure and control measures that have been implemented for their respective tasks/role
- Ensure that any additional safety equipment provided is adequately maintained and not intentionally misused
- Complete all pre start checklists and site specific risk assessments as normal Communications

Consultation

In consultation with workers, supervisors/managers are to ensure that appropriate communication strategies are available as determined during the risk assessment process.

As a bare minimum the worker shall have access to a mobile phone. Other methods of communication to be used in conjunction with a mobile phone can be;

- Range extending aerial with patch lead
- 2 way radios
- Personal GPS devices
- Notification boards at the office
- Satellite Phones

Management are to ensure that the communications strategies identified during the risk assessment process are implemented for the task.

Where workers are to use specialist communication equipment e.g. GPS messaging, they shall receive adequate training in the use of such equipment. Workers should adhere to any reporting processes identified during the risk assessment phase. Supervisors/Managers will monitor any instances of non-compliance and responding accordingly.

Program Requirements

Once the respective departments have identified their isolated workers, they need to document the program that has been tailored to them.

The program should include:

- Location/s
- Worker/s name/s
- Task to carried out
- Equipment to be used
- Level of Risk
- Communication devices available
- Location contact details
- Supervisor/Manager contact details
- Site specific risk assessment
- Weekend contact details if applicable
- Supervisor site visit requirements (if any)
- Worker reporting times i.e. on arrival to site, lunch, departing site
- Is specialist personal GPS equipment required?

BSC Working in Isolation Program

Location:	Date:
Task to be undertaken:	
Level of Risk:	Communication Systems:
Location Contact Details:	
Worker Involved:	
Equipment Being Used:	
Site Specific Risk Assessment to be completed/documented? Yes / No	
How often will Supervisor visit site?	
What times will worker report in and to whom?	
Weekend Contact Details (if applicable)	
Is a GPS messenger to be used?	

WORKER(S) NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE

Supervisors/Managers Name: _____

Supervisors/Managers Signature _____

Sign Off: _____

Date: _____