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Your Safety Matters

This information letter is distributed to those people who are ensuring that their workplace is safe and healthy. This includes members of OHS Committees, OHS Representatives, Safety Officers, Supervisors, Managers and Directors. "Your Safety Matters" (formerly "Committee Member") is free information letter which has been distributed since 1996.

At work Alone



In some instances an employee has to work alone and that in itself could create a risk that has not been anticipated.

Some years ago an employee was working alone on the weekend at a water reservoir. The full details of this tragic incident are not known but apparently he fell into the reservoir and drowned. No one was there to hear his cries for help and render assistance. There were safety buoys nearby but nobody was there to throw one to the drowning man.



When we think of people working alone we tend to think of an employee who is in an isolated location such as an employee on a farm, a geologist doing a survey, or an employee in a forest operation.



However isolation itself is not the basic factor that creates the risk.

The risk arises because someone is working alone where they cannot be seen or heard and will not be visited by another worker for some time. This can occur in any workplace.

The time in which the employee will be alone may only be quite short but nevertheless could result in a tragedy.

An emergency situation may arise because of a medical condition, an accidental work-related injury or because the employee is attacked by an intruder or member of the general public. You may have an employee who works in an area of your workplace where there are no other employees, or perhaps you have an employee who works when everyone else has gone home.

If you have an employee who works alone, a risk assessment should be carried out and steps taken to control any risks involved in that situation.



WorkSafe in Western Australia has published a useful checklist of factors that may increase risk for people who work alone, on page 4 of their Working Alone Guide. You can download a copy of this via our website at www.courtenell.com.au/ohs-resources/ohs-articles-newsletters.html

This publication provides general information about ohs. It is not a legal opinion and does not represent a comprehensive statement of the law to be applied to a particular problem.

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