



INFORMATION SHEET

Remote tour operator work health and safety

Remote tours have become a large part of Western Australia's tourism industry. There are a range of recreational tours available such as snorkelling, diving, four-wheel driving, prospecting and hiking, and each tour carries its own set of significant risks. Remote tour operators have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers and other persons, such as tourists.

What makes remote tours more high risk than regular tours?

Remote areas generally have less access to regular communications, emergency assistance and medical aid compared to the metropolitan area. This isolation, combined with potentially high physical activity in extreme environments, can result in a higher level of risk to workers and other persons, compared to tourism activities in the metropolitan area.

Other factors that contribute to remote tours becoming high risk include:

- lack of emergency facilities or responders
- poor communication channels
- delayed emergency assistance
- limited capacity for supplies
- limited first aid facilities and number of trained first aiders
- lack of head count before, during or after activities
- a lack of knowledge and awareness of the potential for serious incidents
- restricted movements on roads due to rugged terrain or weather events
- extreme environmental conditions
- fire
- flora and fauna risks.

What are the hazards and risks?

If tour operators are not prepared, hazards can result in serious or even fatal injuries.

Incidents in the remote tourism industry have highlighted the importance of having appropriate risk assessments and identified controls in place to ensure the safety of workers and other persons.

There is no shortage of hazards and risks when travelling remotely, including:

- physical environments including rugged and harsh terrain
- activities that can result in injury, such as four wheel driving, rock climbing and rafting
- extreme weather with hot or cold temperatures
- limited medical attention resulting in minor injuries worsening
- limited or no mobile phone coverage
- disorientation or becoming lost or stranded (e.g. vehicle breakdown)
- dehydration
- fatigue
- major medical incidents
- bushfire
- interaction with wildlife (e.g. snakes).

What should I do to minimise the risks?

To conduct remote tours as safely as possible:

- ensure all sites and tours have a risk assessment, detailing the risks to workers and to other persons. Based on that assessment, consider the need for:
 - emergency supplies of shelter, water, food, fuel and maps
 - a safety management plan
 - a global positioning system (GPS) to fix locations
 - appropriate remote communication equipment such as a satellite telephone, a personal locator beacon (PLB), or an emergency position indicating radio beacon (EPIRB)
 - communication plan including scheduled contact and identified contacts
 - appropriate safety-related equipment such as four-wheel driving recovery equipment and life jackets and emergency flares for water craft
- establish a travel plan and agreed emergency response should the plan not be followed
- ensure vehicles or other modes of transport are suitable and well maintained with adequate spare parts available
- provide suitable and well maintained equipment for activities
- provide adequate training to workers in relation to the particular activity, including the potential hazards, risks and control measures to ensure the health and safety of all persons
- provide information to tourists about required fitness levels, or in certain circumstances the need for medical certificates before taking part in certain activities (e.g. diving)
- provide clear information and instructions about required footwear and clothing, personal protective clothing and equipment and sun protection
- conduct medical/fitness checks to identify 'at risk' individuals (age, health conditions, physical ability, affected by alcohol or drug use) and provide them with additional supervision or assistance or a modified program

- implement a first aid plan, ensure an adequate number of staff are trained in first aid and provide appropriate first aid equipment for the activity being undertaken
- ensure there are emergency procedures in place, including contacts that can assist in an emergency such as nearby mine sites and the Royal Flying Doctor Service
- ensure all workers have been trained in and have rehearsed all emergency procedures
- advise emergency services of the intended travel plan in remote locations
- comply with provided instructions and signs
- report identified hazards and facilities requiring maintenance to the relevant authority
- assess the conditions of the tour, including checking the:
 - Main Roads' online [Travel Map](#) for road conditions such as closures and flooding
 - [Emergency WA website](#) for bushfires and national disasters
 - Parks and Wildlife Services [Park Alerts System](#) if you are travelling to a national or marine park
 - [Bureau of Meteorology](#) for weather information.

Self-guided tours – additional controls

There are a range of self-guided tours, such as walking, cycling and canoe tours available in Western Australia, where tourists are provided with a trip route and information. Equipment, such as bicycles, kayaks or canoes may be provided on some tours. Longer tours may include luggage transfers, meals, accommodation and transport from the meet point to accommodation.

Because these tours are not supervised by a tour guide, they may have a higher level of risk if tourists:

- are not aware of the hazards on the route
- have limited first aid knowledge or inadequate means of communication, delaying response times in an emergency
- have limited experience with any provided equipment.

The health and safety requirements for these tours will vary depending on the terrain, activities, length of tour and availability of emergency assistance.

Tour operators have a duty to identify hazards of the route and associated activities, assess the risks and must eliminate, so far as is reasonably practicable, the risk associated with the activities.

In addition to the control measures listed above, information provided to tourists may include:

- detailed trip notes and maps (it may be necessary to use pictures or alternative languages)
- appropriate safety equipment, such as life preservers for water activities, and check that tourists can competently use the equipment
- a means of communication and ensure tourists can use it
- clear instructions on meeting points and times, and the procedure that will be followed if tourists are late
- an appropriate first aid kit
- waterproof clothing
- information on safe equipment use, such as how to cycle safely on rough terrain, or what to do if the bike is damaged in a fall
- simple repair equipment, such as a bike pump, repair kit and repair instructions.

Driving in remote areas

Breakdowns can leave you stranded in remote areas. Even if your approximate location is known and you were expected to check in regularly, rescue can take several days. People can become dehydrated quickly in hot conditions, affecting their decision making and coordination skills. Provide enough food and water to last the trip, plus three-to-four days to ensure adequate supplies in an emergency.

Ensure workers and tourists know that they must stay with the vehicle if it breaks down – a vehicle is easier to locate by air than a person.

Workers should have a schedule of times they are expected to check in with the tour operator (or another contact person). There must be a procedure in place for contacting emergency services if contact is not made as scheduled.

Mobile reception is usually not available on remote roads. Provide a means of communication suitable for the location, such as a satellite phone, personal locator beacon or an emergency position indicating radio beacon and ensure workers are trained in its use. When driving on remote roads, also provide an ultra-high frequency (UHF) radio to be able to communicate with other road users or persons in the area.

Depending on the planned route and destination, the tour operator should consider whether drivers should be trained in survival skills, navigation skills, off-road four-wheel driving or basic emergency mechanical knowledge (such as changing a fan belt, cleaning a fuel filter or changing a tyre).

The tour operator should ensure the vehicle is suitable for the terrain, and is well-maintained. Drivers should be trained to check the vehicle before the tour leaves, and the vehicle should carry spare parts (including two spare tyres and a spare battery). Extra fuel should be provided in very remote areas. If the vehicle is carrying a load, workers must be trained to check whether the load is secure, stable and safe.

Main Roads, RAC and the Road Safety Commission websites provide more information on driving on remote roads in Western Australia.

Fatigue risk

Remote tour workers can become mentally or physically exhausted. Long hours are common and fatigue can be missed or overlooked. It is important to identify and manage fatigue risks. Further information can be found in Safe Work Australia's [*Guide for managing the risk of fatigue at work*](#).

How do I manage risks?

You should conduct a risk assessment before each tour season to ensure the safety of workers and tourists.

Guidance on the risk management process can be found in the [How to manage work health and safety risks: Code of practice](#).

Risk controls for hazards that may arise on remote tours include:

Hazard	Potential injury	Possible controls
Loose rocky terrain Slippery rocks in wet conditions	Slips, trips and falls	Ensure workers and tourists wear covered footwear with a non-slip sole. Provide workers and tourists with a trekking pole.
Hot temperatures	Fatigue Dehydration Heat stress Sunburn	Check the forecast before each tour, and tour earlier in the morning. Educate workers and tourists in the importance of staying hydrated and using sun protection. Provide drinking water.
Cold temperatures	Hypothermia	Check the forecast before each tour, and tour during warmer times of the day. Educate workers and tourists in the importance of staying warm and sheltered from harsh cold climates. Provide advice on suitable clothing. Consider providing emergency rain protection or hand warmers.
Windy conditions	Sand blown into eyes or stinging skin	Inform workers and tourists of hazards before the trip. Encourage long sleeves and sunglasses. Carry first aid kit.
Insect bites	Irritation or allergy	Inform workers and tourists of hazards before the trip and suggest appropriate clothing. Provide insect repellent. Carry first aid kit; consider access to an epinephrine auto-injector (e.g. EpiPen).
Snake bite or animal bite	Poisoning or bite wound	Inform workers and tourists of hazards before the trip. Carry appropriate first aid kit. Have an emergency response plan in place.
Water activities	Drowning	Inform workers and tourists of hazards before the trip and ensure all are competent swimmers. Carry appropriate and approved floatation devices. Carry appropriate first aid kit. Provide supervision and conduct a regular head count.

Hazard	Potential injury	Possible controls
Vehicle accident	Serious or fatal injury	Ensure vehicle and associated equipment is appropriate to the task. Drivers should be qualified and competent for the task undertaken. Ensure seatbelts are used properly. Carry vehicle recovery and first aid equipment. Have a remote travel plan and appropriate communication equipment.
Medical episode	Health or physical injury	Ensure workers and tourists are fit to undertake the planned activity. Carry relevant medications where required, including spare medication. Carry first aid kit. Have emergency communication plan in place.

How do I ensure nobody gets injured on my tour?

The key to safety is preparation and training.

Before the tour, obtain information from tourists, including their personal health conditions, medication, emergency contacts and personal doctor. Establish a rapport with tourists, and encourage them to report any incidents that occur, no matter how minor or small they may appear. Inform all tourists of the inherent risks involved with attending the specific remote tour.

Provide information about risks and safety precautions in a language that each tourist can understand. It may be necessary to have briefing cards printed in multiple languages or use pictures.

It is important to remember that sometimes things go wrong, either due to factors out of your control or through human error. This is where being prepared is vital. Having comprehensive communication and emergency plans and sufficient first aid training will minimise the impact of an injury to a worker or tourist.

By following a risk assessment process and training staff in emergency situations, risk to tourists can be minimised.

If a worker or tourist suffers a serious injury or illness, or an incident occurs in a remote location and the person needs to be transferred urgently to a medical facility, the work health and safety regulator must be notified. Further information, including a list of notifiable incidents, can be found in the [Incident notification: Guideline](#)

References and further information

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

- [*How to manage work health and safety risks: Code of practice*](#)
- [*Incident notification: Guideline*](#)
- [*Old mine workings: Pamphlet*](#)
- [*Prospecting on Crown land in Western Australia*](#)
- [*Seven golden rules for prospecting*](#)
- [*Travelling in remote locations: Pamphlet*](#)

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

- [*Safety and navigation*](#)

Main Roads

- [*Long distance driving*](#)
- [*Regional driving conditions*](#)
- [*Safety*](#)

NT Worksafe

- [*Central Australia tourism: Work health and safety guide*](#)
- [*Managing the risk of sea snake bites in the fishing and aquaculture industry*](#)

RAC Western Australia

- [*A beginner's guide to taking your 4WD off-road in WA*](#)
- [*Driving long distance – Safety tips for the road*](#)
- [*How to prepare and pack your car for a long road trip*](#)
- [*Planning for the Canning Stock Route – Things to know before tackling this challenging four-wheel drive track*](#)

Road Safety Commission

- [*Visitors to regional WA*](#)

Safe Work Australia

- [*Guide for managing the risk of fatigue at work*](#)

WorkSafe Queensland

- [*Recreational diving fatality*](#)