



# ISOLATED EMPLOYEES

## Commercial vehicle drivers

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### Inspection campaign

In 2013/14, WorkSafe will be conducting a campaign to raise awareness of the Coroner's recommendations and to ensure compliance with legislative requirements related to truck drivers working alone. The campaign will involve Inspectors visiting transport organisations to identify common safety risks and provide employers with information on how to comply with Occupational Safety and Health requirements.

This newsletter has been developed to highlight safety risks for commercial vehicle drivers working alone and to provide information on how to best manage those risks to minimise workplace injuries and comply with Occupational Safety and Health legislation.

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### Why is WorkSafe conducting this campaign?

The risk of injury or harm for people who work alone or work remotely may be increased because of difficulty contacting emergency services when they are required. Emergency situations may arise because of the sudden onset of a medical condition, accidental work-related injury or disease, exposure to the elements or extreme temperatures, or by becoming stranded without food or water. The consequences may be very serious and the injury or disease may be fatal.

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### What can you do before an inspector visits?

The following are some things which you can do before an inspector visits.

- Work through the checklists at the back of this publication to identify safety issues, then resolve any issues identified;
  - If you are a small business, consider seeking a free safety consultation through ThinkSafe Small business;
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### CASE STUDY - Improving communications for truck drivers working alone

In 2011 a truck driver working alone died from heatstroke when he walked away from his bogged vehicle near Wiluna. In 2013/2014, WorkSafe will be conducting a campaign to raise awareness of the Coroner's recommendations and to ensure compliance with legislative requirements related to truck drivers working alone.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act and Regulations require:

- The supply of clean, cool drinking water.
- That a means of communication is available for drivers to call for help in the case of an emergency.
- That there is a procedure for regular contact to be made with the driver.
- That drivers are trained in these contact procedures.

These are minimum compliance requirements for workers working alone.

### What can be done to prevent this?

Employers shall:

1. Ensure the supply of cool, clean drinking water.
2. Assess all routes to ensure that a means of reliable communication is available at all times.

This relates to drivers who are isolated due to the nature of their work, and not only to those in remote locations. In most instances, a solitary truck driver is considered an isolated employee regardless of their geographical location. Extra care should be taken where ordinary means of communication may be unreliable or where it may take some time for assistance to arrive in the case of an emergency. Current technology, such as GPS messenger devices, offers a practicable, simple to use and inexpensive communication option.

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# Checklists

## Effective communication such as GPS messaging device [safety checklist](#)

Check	yes	no	n/a
Are drivers provided with a means of effective communication such as a GPS messaging device along with written instructions on how to use it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a system of work in place which ensures that there is a means of communication for drivers who may be working under sub-contracting arrangements and that they cannot leave a depot without one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Water [safety checklist](#)

Check	yes	no	n/a
Is clean, cool, drinking water provided for, and is readily accessible to persons working at the workplace?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Written instructions and directions [safety checklist](#)

Check	yes	no	n/a
Are there systems whereby all drivers travelling out of the metropolitan area, especially to mine sites, are provided written directions and maps which clearly explain how to get to the expected destination.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Tracking procedures/location/whereabouts of employees [safety checklist](#)

Check	yes	no	n/a
Are there procedures in place to ascertain the whereabouts of late running truck drivers, with a view to ensuring that account is kept of each drivers expected time of arrival so that emergency services can be notified in a timely manner should no one be able to contact the driver.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Emergency breakdown procedures [safety checklist](#)

Check	yes	no	n/a
Are drivers who are expected to travel to areas outside the metropolitan area provided with 'route specific emergency breakdown card' which includes site specific information such as:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• instructions about what to do or not to do in an emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• what channels of the UHF could be used and whether they are monitored	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• who to call in the event of an emergency and what numbers to call in the event of an emergency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• instructions on locating and using satellite phones, personal locator beacon (PLB) or GPS should also be set out on the card.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Further reading

- Occupational Safety and Health legislation
- Guidance Note : [Working alone](#)
- Bulletin: [Travelling in remote locations](#)
- Bulletin: [Working in hot conditions](#)

## Isolated commercial vehicle drivers - Identify the hazards and risks

Extreme weather conditions, remoteness and vast distances in Western Australia, together with rarely travelled roads, mean that if you break down or get lost, you may not be found for some time.

Extremes of climate can bring on dangerous medical conditions. If you are not prepared, the consequences of being stranded in remote areas can be serious.

### Assess the risk

Breakdowns can leave you stranded while working in remote areas. Even if your approximate whereabouts are known and you were expected to check in regularly, rescue can take several days.

People can survive for long periods without food, but the human body is ill-equipped to cope with dehydration, which affects decision making and reduces coordination — essential skills for survival in an emergency situation.

Information on assessing the risk is given in sections 2 and 4 of the Guidance note on Working Alone

Some safe work practices that may be relevant.

- Plan all trips and ensure that someone in a supervisory position knows your plan.
- Arrange a schedule of times when you will contact a nominated person, and keep to the schedule.
- Your contact person should be briefed to arrange a search as soon as a scheduled contact is missed. There should be a procedure in place concerning the time lapse before contacting emergency services (usually 24 hours).
- The four vital requirements to support life are water, shelter, warmth and food. Always ensure you set out with adequate supplies of, and provision for, these to sustain you in the event that you are stranded. This is important even if you are planning to go to a remote area for only a short period.
- Ensure that you take appropriate communications and location equipment for the area you are going to and that you know how to use them. These may include a long-range radio or mobile satellite phone, global positioning system, emergency position indicating radio beacon and maps.
- Ensure that your vehicle is suitable for the terrain you plan to travel through, and that it has been adequately maintained to minimise the risk of breakdown.
- Ensure that your vehicle has a dual battery system and both batteries are in excellent working condition.
- Carry essential spare parts, tools and recovery equipment, and ensure you know how to use them. Carry at least two spare wheels with tyres.
- Carry a suitable first aid kit and ensure that at least one of your team knows how to administer first aid.
- Never leave your vehicle if it breaks down. It is easier for rescue parties to find a vehicle than a person.
- Check weather forecasts before you depart and while you are away, and change your plans or delay the trip if necessary.
- Avoid working or travelling alone in remote locations wherever possible.
- Contact regional police stations for advice on road conditions.
- Ask to attend a survival course if you regularly work in remote areas.

There is useful information available on remote area travel available through the Royal Flying Doctor Service on [www.flyingdoctor.org.au](http://www.flyingdoctor.org.au)

*Source: Travelling in remote locations – WorkSafe bulletin*

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## ThinkSafe small business - Free occupational safety and health consultation

If you are a small business owner and want to make your workplace safe, the ThinkSafe Small Business Assistance Program can help you. The good news is that the program:

- is free;
- is easy to obtain;
- provides up to 3 hours consultation time;
- is a simple process with clear and immediate outcomes

To apply go online to download an application form [www.worksafe.wa.gov.au](http://www.worksafe.wa.gov.au)→services→thinksafe small business

## Working safely in hot conditions

### *Organisation of work*

Heat stress can be reduced by attention to the way work is organised. Examples include:

- rescheduling work so the hot tasks are performed during the cooler part of the day or in cooler times of the year;
- reducing the time an individual spends doing the hot tasks eg by job or task rotation;
- arranging for more workers to do the job;
- providing additional rest breaks in cool, shaded areas; and
- using mechanical aids to reduce physical exertion.

### *Providing training and information*

Training and information will enable workers to:

- identify hazards associated with heat stress;
- recognise symptoms of heat stress and heat illness;
- identify appropriate first aid procedures;
- understand how to avoid heat illness;
- recognise the potential dangers associated with the use of alcohol and/or drugs; and
- use appropriate protective clothing and equipment.

Toolbox meetings and pre-start meetings present opportunities to reinforce the actions needed to avoid heat illness.

### *Providing personal protective clothing*

Outdoor workers should be provided with protection against ultraviolet exposure, such as a wide brim hat, loose fitting, long sleeved collared shirt and long pants, sunglasses and sunscreen.

### *Keeping well hydrated*

The Western Australian Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 require that a supply of clean, cool drinking water is provided and is readily accessible to workers.

Keeping well hydrated is a critical factor in avoiding heat illness. Information on keeping well hydrated should be provided as part of workplace inductions. Workers should be encouraged to start their shift fully hydrated. An easy way to establish hydration status is by checking the colour and volume of urine. If urine is plentiful and a light straw colour, this is an indicator of good hydration. During hot work conditions, workers should be encouraged to drink a cup of water (about 250ml) every 15 to 20 minutes.

Although water is generally adequate for fluid replacement, low joule cordials and electrolyte replacement solutions may be provided to encourage fluid intake. High sugar cordials and sports drinks are not recommended.

Caffeinated drinks and alcohol should be avoided since these are diuretics that cause increased rate of urination.

### *Allowing for acclimatisation*

Workers, in particular those with fly-in flyout contracts, may experience significant differences in climatic conditions between the workplace and their off-work location, especially after an extended absence.

Suitable acclimatisation procedures should be considered for workers who are subject to hot work conditions. Such procedures should be developed in consultation with workers and consider the particular shift roster schedules used.

### *Other preventative measures*

Providing:

- adequate supervision of workers; and
- first aid facilities, instruction and training and access to medical help.

If symptoms occur, workers need to rest in a cool, shaded, well-ventilated area and drink cool fluids. If symptoms do not reduce quickly, seek medical help.

Employers should plan ahead and ensure all the necessary measures for preventing heat illness can be implemented when hot weather is predicted.

Source: WorkSafe Bulletin: Working in hot conditions

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