

Xchanging Safety Sheet

Number 114

Working Alone in Mobile Workplaces

Many employees work alone in mobile workplaces, including nurses conducting home visits, sales representatives visiting clients, cleaners, real estate agents, tradespeople and nannies. Due to the nature of employment, and the tasks performed, it is essential employers identify and assess the risks associated with working alone in mobile workplaces and implement appropriate control measures.

What should we consider when addressing the risks associated with Working Alone in Mobile Workplaces?

In identifying the hazards associated with working alone in a mobile workplace, and implementing control measures, the following elements need to be taken into consideration:

- Develop emergency procedures for employees working alone in a mobile workplace. These procedures outline measures employees need to take to ensure personal safety, and also the procedure for reporting incidents or near misses
- Develop procedures for the work tasks performed. It is essential that work procedures outline the preventative measures employees need to take to ensure their personal safety.

For example

In the case of a real estate agent meeting a potential buyer at a home showing, ensure:

- ID checks are done to ensure the client is who they say they are
 - The premises are assessed prior to the home inspection. Identify any hazards eg; exposed wires, broken windows, loose locks
 - The agent is aware of the nearest exit from the premises
 - Vehicles are not parked in a manner where they may be blocked in
 - Fellow employees are aware of the agents location and anticipated return time
 - Another employee accompanies the agent, where possible, to the site visit
 - There is a follow-up procedure if the real estate agent does not report back in an agreed time – which includes contacting Police after a specified period
- Provide employees with a means of contacting a supervisor or fellow employee in the event of an emergency – this may be emergency beacons, mobile phones, two-way radio
 - Review security procedures to ensure employees are not placed at risk of injury
 - Review work operations to determine in the tasks can be performed in pairs rather than in isolation
 - Review the type of work completed alone and in a mobile workplace. If it is not critical to business performance, identify a change which will improve employee safety
 - Ensure supervisors are aware of employee work schedules and locations so the employee can be contacted in the event of an emergency
 - Ensure supervisors are in regular telephone contact with employees to ensure their safety
 - Consult with employees and complete a detailed risk assessment, prior to any mobile work, to identify hazards they may be exposed to - throughout the course of their work tasks
 - Provide and train employees in written Safe Work Practices, to reduce risks as far as is reasonably practicable
 - Provide training and communication to employees working alone and in mobile workplaces – ensure communication is appropriate to the workforce. Eg for employees whom English may be a second language, ensure training material is available in their preferred language
 - Ensure all employees are aware of their general obligations under the OHS Act. Specifically, employees are required to take reasonable care to ensure their own health and safety at work
 - Ensure employees understand that if they feel threatened, they should remove themselves from the threatening situation and report the matter immediately to their supervisor

Strategies to prevent injuries from Working Alone in Mobile Workplaces

Identify	How a person could be injured through working alone in mobile workplaces
Assess	How likely this is to occur and what the consequence would be
Control	The risks by ensuring that control measures are implemented
Review	The risk management strategies to ensure they are adequate.

Investigating Working Alone in Mobile Workplaces hazards using a short checklist

Here are some issues concerning working alone in mobile workplaces that may affect the safety of employees. If you (or they) answer 'no' to any of these, then further action may be needed.

Working alone in mobile workplaces

Questions	Yes	No – needs attention
Risk assessments have been conducted in consultation with employees to identify hazards associated with work tasks		
Appropriate communication methods are provided for employees, prior to any mobile activity. For example emergency beacons, mobile phones, two-way radio		
Employees are trained to a competent level in applicable Safe Work Practices for the tasks they are required to perform		
All employees trained in and provided with specific emergency procedures		
All employees are aware of the procedure to report incidents and near misses in the workplace		
Communication to employees is in their preferred language		
Appropriate control measures are implemented for identified hazards		
Regular contact is made with employees to ensure their safety and health when working alone		

References

WorkSafe Western Australia – Working Alone Guidance Note
WorkSafe Victoria Guidance Note, Real Estate Agent – Out of Office Safety

Services Available

Xchanging can provide clients with advice concerning appropriate controls aimed at achieving injury prevention at your workplace. Please contact the OHS Consultants at risk.management@au.xchanging.com for further information.