VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

OHS Working Alone or in Isolation

This policy is important to:

- **Staff**
- **Students**
- **Contractors**

POLICY NUMBER:	**POH120424002**
DATE APPROVED:	**2 April 2012**
POLICY CATEGORY:	**People and Culture**
POLICY OWNER:	**Vice-President People & Culture**

1. CONTEXT

There are specific risks associated with working when emergency response is limited due to the lack of immediate assistance in the event of an emergency situation.

Working alone or in isolation can involve working after hours, working in a remote location and/or working when emergency response is limited. In some situations, a person may be alone for a couple of hours; while in others, the person may work alone for days, weeks or years in remote or isolated locations. The intention of this policy is to ensure compliance with the relevant provisions of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 – specifically to provide a safe and healthy working environment for Victoria University employees, contractors, students and visitors. This policy also aims to provide a means for Managers and staff to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, specific risks are eliminated or minimised in relevant situations.

2. DEFINITIONS

Appropriate Manager, means the employee's manager as below:
- *Staff:* Head of Division/Branch, School/Area, Department or Centre
- *Contractors:* Victoria University on-site contact
- *Students:* Lecturer or Head of School

Version 1

Emergency Situation means any situation where a person's health is at risk. Some examples of emergency situations include: fire, bomb threat, intruders, physical assault, personal injury, sudden illness, accident, etc.

Employee, for the purposes of the remainder of this policy, means all staff, students and contractors as defined below:
- *Staff:* any person who has a current employment contract with Victoria University
- *Contractor:* any person paid for providing services for Victoria University that is not under a current employment contract
- *Student:* any person enrolled in any approved unit, course or degree offered by Victoria University

Reasonably practicable is a key word used in relation to risk control in the OHS Act 2004, and means "capable of being put into practice, done or effected with available means. In determining what is 'reasonably practicable' regard must be had to the following matters:
a. the likelihood of the hazard or risk concerned eventuating;
b. the degree of harm that would result if the hazard or risk eventuated;
c. what the person concerned knows, or ought to know, about the hazard or risk and any
d. ways of eliminating or reducing the risk;
e. the availability and suitability of ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard or risk;
f. the cost of eliminating or reducing the hazard or risk." (OHS Act 2004)

Remote means a place separated by time or distance from Victoria University Security services, essential emergency services and/or other required services, such that the location presents a significant increase in risk.

Working After Hours means undertaking work, study or recreation in any part of a Victoria University controlled workplace, outside of the times specified for individual buildings on the various campuses. This information can be obtained by visiting the Security Website and accessing the Building Access Hours for the relevant campus or by contacting Security on 6666.

Working Alone or in Isolation means a person cannot be seen or heard by another person and when they cannot expect contact from another employee for over an hour. This can include, but is not limited to, working:
(i) in an office or laboratory outside normal business hours or when everyone else has left;
(ii) in situations where employees are called out at night;
(iii) on field trips to remote locations, or
(iv) within VU premises in a location that is distant or concealed.

Working when Emergency Response is Limited means that access to emergency services (e.g. ambulance, first aid, police, fire services) in the event of an emergency situation is either non-existent or limited due to:
- Working after hours,
- Working in a remote location and/or
- Working alone or in isolation.

3. STATEMENT OF POLICY

3.1 Appropriate managers (see definition in section 3) shall take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the safety and health of employees (see definition in section 3) working alone or in isolation.

3.2 Appropriate managers are responsible for approving proposals for employees to work alone or in isolation subject to satisfactory completion of a risk assessment in accordance with the requirements of this policy (5.5).

3.3 Appropriate managers who are not familiar with the risk assessment process and/or who have never approved a risk assessment must contact a member of the OHS Team for guidance and training. The OHS Team is responsible for conducting relevant and timely risk assessment training, as well as support and guidance, for all appropriate managers who are involved in and approve risk assessments.

3.4 In addition, appropriate managers are required to ensure that employees who are approved to work alone or in isolation are adequately trained and informed to perform their work safely and that reliable means of communication are supplied and maintained for the purpose of emergency contact.

3.5 Employees intending to work alone or in isolation shall complete a risk assessment and be required to obtain approval from their appropriate manager prior to commencing such work. Without limiting VU's responsibilities as an employer, employees must take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure their own safety when working alone or in isolation and must comply with instructions, workplace procedures and the controls identified through the risk assessment process. (Please note that Security is available to escort people to their vehicles after hours and some campuses have a shuttle bus that operates between the campus and train stations. For more information regarding these and other services and information, please explore the VU website and intranet.)

3.6 Employees intending to work alone or in isolation at a University location shall, where practical, notify Security 24 hours in advance of arrival at the workplace. If 24 hours notice cannot be given, the employee should notify Security when they arrive and when they leave, where practicable.

3.7 If an employee requires Security to access a building (i.e. they do not have key or FOB access), access will be granted at the discretion of Security. Where Security services are not available at a particular campus during the period of intended after-hours access, it may be necessary for Security services to be engaged for the purposes of maintaining a secure site, granting access and securing the site at completion. The cost associated with providing the access will be the responsibility of the centre requesting the access.

3.8 Uncommon or unusual situations that arise in relation to working alone or in isolation must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate manager and the employee, in conjunction with Security. This includes those employees who work alone or in isolation on a daily basis as an inherent part of their ongoing position.

NOTE: Employees traveling and/or working overseas should refer to the Overseas Travel Risk Management Policy for guidance in dealing with these situations

3.9 Where employees have not followed the correct procedures outlined above, Security may ask them to leave the University grounds; however this is at the discretion of the Security Officer on duty at the time. In all circumstances, Security has the final say on whether or not an employee may work alone or in isolation on Victoria University controlled grounds.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Risk Assessment

4.1.1 A 'Working Alone or in Isolation Notification and Risk Assessment Form' must be completed by employees and approved by their appropriate manager before undertaking any work considered to be performed alone or in isolation.

4.1.2 The appropriate manager must review the Working Alone or in Isolation Notification and Risk Assessment Form submitted by the employee and:

(i) *where* the appropriate manager is *satisfied that the employee has adequately identified and* addresse*d the risks associated with conducting the work,* they must *sign the risk assessment form and fill out the Working Alone or in Isolation Approval Form, acknowledging that the assessment has been completed and approved.*

(ii) where the appropriate manager is **not** satisfied that the employee has adequately identified and addressed the risks associated with conducting the work alone or in isolation, they must work with the employee to conduct a thorough risk assessment.

4.1.3 Generic assessments are permitted and approved risk assessments developed less than 12 months previous may be used for working alone or in isolation repeatedly provided that no significant changes

to the work or working environment have been made and the existing risk assessment remains entirely applicable. All working alone or in isolation risk assessments must be reviewed and updated every 12 months, as a minimum.

4.1.4   If changes to the work or working environment have occurred, a risk assessment must be completed for these changes only. The previous risk assessment may be attached and re-submitted.

4.2 Identification

Employees working alone or in isolation must carry on their person their staff/student identification. The identification must be worn at all times. Employees will not be allowed to access or remain in a building after hours without their staff/student identification card.

4.3 Communication

4.3.1   Employees working alone or in isolation must have access to a reliable and readily available means of communication at all times. "Reliable and readily available" will be depend on the situation, but common communication means include mobile and satellite phones, land-line, short-wave radio, intercom, e-mail, MS Communicator, etc.

4.3.2   In the event of an emergency after hours, employees are to:
(i)   Ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, they are safe at all times.
(ii)   Avoid, as far as reasonably practicable, placing themselves in a risky situation.
(iii) Initiate the University Response procedures by calling Security on 6666.
(iv)   Obey any evacuation signal.
(v)   Go to and remain at the assembly area so they can be accounted for.

4.4 Notification
4.4.1 *Security present*
4.4.1.1   *On arrival* at a University work place where Security is present after hours, employees working after hours may choose to contact Security on 6666 to advise of their presence. Contact may also be made with Security to advise that the employee is leaving the premises.
4.4.1.2   Employees should also advise a family member or other person of their anticipated time of starting and completing work and the exact location of the work.

4.4.2 *Isolated location/Security not present*
In the case of employees working in an isolated location (that is not a University location), a reliable means of communication must be established and maintained for the duration of the work and may include land or mobile phones, radio communication systems, satellite communication systems, and/or emergency location beacons. The means of communication will be determined by the risks associated with the work to be undertaken and the availability and functionality of the systems themselves. The appropriate manager or his/her nominee must be informed that the employee is working in a remote location and regular contact should be maintained with the appropriate manager or his/her nominee. When the work is completed and the employee has departed the isolated location the appropriate manager and/or his/her nominee must be notified.

4.5 Training

4.5.1   All employees must be trained in Emergency procedures in accordance with the Critical Incident and Emergency Management Policy.

4.5.2   *Employees:* Employees will be trained in Emergency Procedures during staff induction, contractor induction or student orientation. Employees can complete an online Emergency Procedures Training Module, located on the People and Culture OHS Team website under "Emergency".

5. POLICY ADVISOR

6. RELATED POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

Victoria University OHS Legislative Compliance Policy
Victoria University Occupational Health and Safety Charter
Victoria University Critical Incident and Emergency Response Policy
Victoria University Overseas Travel Risk Management Policy
Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

POLICY HISTORY

Version approval date	Summary of changes
2 April 2012 *(POH120424002)*	Reviewed policy
16 December 2011 *(POH120125002)*	Minor modification – updated replaced "Human Resources" with "People and Culture".
29 August 2006 *(POH060822001)*	New Policy

PEOPLE AND CULTURE: HR72

WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION NOTIFICATION

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY
MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

Supervisor or Manager: _____

Work location: _____

Work description: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Proposed dates: _____

Transport arrangements: _____

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

University or other contact: _____

Frequency or schedule of contact: _____

Primary means of communication: _____

Secondary means of communication (if required): _____

Action to be taken if contact not made in accordance with the above: _____

_____

ITINERARY

DATES/TIMES	LOCATION	ACCOMMODATION	CONTACT DETAILS

PRIMARY CHECKLIST (EMPLOYEE TO COMPLETE)	TICK
I am aware of the details of the work and all relevant safety policies, procedures and codes of conduct applicable to my work.	☐
All equipment, vehicles and tools have been checked for safe operation prior to the work.	☐
I have made all agreed upon arrangements for the effective management of emergencies that may arise in the course of the work.	☐

SECURITY CHECKLIST (EMPLOYEE TO COMPLETE)	YES/NO
Where practical, I will notify Security services 24 hours in advance of my arrival at a university location where I will be working alone or in isolation.	☐YES ☐ NO
Where Security services are not available at this site I have ascertained that access needs to be provided by Security services.	☐YES ☐ NO
In the event that additional Security services are required I have advised my appropriate manager of the cost associated with this.	☐YES ☐ NO

Funding source: Estimated cost of additional security service: _____

Account code to be debited: ___ ___ ___ . ___ ___ . ___ ___ ___ . ___ ___ ___ / _____ %

Version 1

Costs approved by: _____   Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Costs approved by: _____   Date: ___ / ___ / _____

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WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

HAZARDS	LIKELIHOOD AND CONSEQUENCE	CONTROL
What can cause harm or ill health to fieldworkers or others working remotely or in isolation? Consider: Manual Handling (over exertion, repetition, awkward loads) Hazardous Substances (chemical, biological, radioactive) Physical noise, heat, electricity, violence Psychological stress, workload, potential conflict Falls, slips, trips, working from height, falling objects Machinery, machines, plant and equipment Transportation, 'getting lost', fire and emergency	Make a judgment regarding the probability of the hazard causing an incident (**likelihood**) and the potential consequences of that incident.	How can you reduce the **likelihood** of exposure or the consequences? You should use the hierarchy of controls in determining how best to control the hazards identified. Hierarchy of controls: **Elimination** — Can you eliminate the hazard altogether? **Substitution** — Can you substitute less hazardous equipment, substances or agents? **Engineering** — Would the hazard be reduced by ventilation, barriers or isolation? **Administrative** — Is training, policy or safe working procedures required? **PPE** — What Personal Protective Equipment would be appropriate?

HAZARDS What could harm fieldworkers?	LIKELIHOOD Rare, Moderate, Frequent	CONSEQUENCES What could happen?	CONTROLS What are you going to do to reduce the risk?
GENERAL (Manual handling, slips trips and falls, ergonomics etc)			
SPECIFIC HAZARDS (relating to activities)			
TRANSPORTATION (personnel, equipment and materials)			

Supervisor: _____ Date: ___ / ___ / ____ Signature	Conditions of Approval (attach additional pages if necessary)