Southern Cross University

SAFETY ALERT

To:	All staff and students	**Issued:** 27/05/2024
		Alert #: 3
Subject:	Working Remotely and Isolated - A QLD worker was found deceased after attempting to seek assistance when the vehicle he was travelling in became bogged.	
Purpose:	To advise staff and students on the hazard	

SAFETY ISSUES

Remote or isolated work is work that separates someone from other people and can make it harder to get help such as rescue, medical assistance, and emergency services. This can be due to location, time, or the nature of the work being done.

Examples:

- Staff, students and others carrying out work e.g., field work, research, office work, alone on or off campus.
- Health and community workers working in isolation with members of the public.
- Long distance remote driving.
- Farm workers and Property Services personnel completing task alone.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL RISK

- Death or serious injury
- Won't get help in an emergency
- Workers are more vulnerable

POSSIBLE CONTROL MEASURES TO PREVENT INCIDENTS

- Before you leave, tell someone where you're going and when you'll return.
- Make sure you have the right communication equipment you need to stay in touch, for example, a mobile phone, 2-way radio, or satellite phone.
- Take enough water and food.
- Have a call-in system. For example, if you're working on a farm, arrange to call in via 2-way radio at specific times, or when you move to another location. When on campus call in via security to advise of arrival and leaving times.
- Keep first-aid equipment handy and make sure you know how to use it.
- Make sure you have access to an emergency position-indicating radio beacon (EPIRB) or GPS tracking system.
- Include a list of emergency numbers and property GPS coordinates on a card nearby.
- Have the appropriate recovery gear if travelling off road.

ACTIONS

- Review of work practices: consider the location where the work is being done. For example, think about environmental conditions and distance to facilities and resources. Identify the work and work processes that require workers to be remote or isolated.

- Talking to your workers —talk to your workers to get their ideas about potential risks and hazards at work. Also think about ways to include workers who are less likely to speak up in a group meeting or who might have language or reading and writing barriers.

- Considering the worker and any individual factors, like their experience and training, that may affect their ability to work remotely and manage the environment.

- Reviewing available information —look at if travelling, look at the BOM, and maps, information from a range of sources and gather ideas about how other places of work are managing remote or isolated work.

- Movement records — keeping track of workers can help control the risks. This can be done with systems for calling in with supervisors or colleagues, satellite tracking systems or devices.

- Make sure workers can communicate effectively and get help if needed

- The type of communication system will depend on the environment and location of the work. In some cases, you might need expert advice or local knowledge to select the best system. Communication systems can include:

    - personal security systems, such as non-movement sensors that automatically activate an alarm transmission if the transmitter or transceiver has not moved within a certain time. This alarm should then trigger a process for an emergency response

    - radio communication systems

    - satellite communication systems

    - distress beacons, for example emergency position indication radio beacons (EPIRB) used in ships and boats, emergency locator transmitters (ELT) used in aircraft, and person locator beacons (PLB) for personal use

    - mobile phones — in locations which have mobile coverage. If there is any doubt about coverage, you should consult with the provider or have a backup system

- Supply the correct equipment for the task e.g., recovery gear if working/travelling off road.

- Ensure skills, training and experience of the worker, as well as their physical and psychological health. Workers should be given training before working alone or remotely. Examples of topics to include in training (depending on the work being done) are:

    - using communications systems

    - administering first aid

    - getting help in an emergency

    - driving off-road vehicles

    - bush survival

Further information: Workcover QLD