STANDARD
REMOTE AND ISOLATED WORK

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1 Purpose

This document describes the standards and procedures within Hunter Water Corporation (HWC) to manage Remote and Isolated Work effectively. It represents the HWC Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Management System's commitment to compliance with the NSW WHS Act and WHS Regulation.

2 Objectives

The objectives of this standard are to ensure that all areas, functions, and work processes that may have a Remote and Isolated Work risk are effectively managed to ensure the health and safety of Hunter Water people, contractors, and the general public.

3 Scope

This Standard applies to all Hunter Water Business Units. This standard covers the requirements associated with Remote and Isolated work within Hunter Water's area of operations.

4 Definitions, Acronyms and Abbreviations

Term	Definition
After Hours	Between 6 pm and 6 am, Monday to Friday, weekends, public holidays, or any other time while the facility is usually vacated.
Agreed Point of Contact	An agreed person the worker contacts before, during & on completion of remote or isolated work.
Assistance	Assistance includes rescue, medical aid, and the attendance of emergency services workers.
Hazard	A situation that can harm a person and the environment and damage property.
Hierarchy of Controls	Identified the risk control actions and responsibilities by identifying controls in the following specific order: ▪ Eliminate the hazard If elimination of the hazard is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risk so far as reasonably practicable by: ▪ Substituting (wholly or partly) the hazard giving rise to the risk with something that gives rise to a lesser risk ▪ Isolating the hazard from any person exposed to it. ▪ Implementing engineering controls If a risk remains, then minimising the remaining risk, so far as reasonably practicable, by implementing administrative controls & PPE.
Line Supervisor	A Line Supervisor is a person with day-to-day supervisory responsibilities for workers within a functional area of the business. A Line Supervisor includes, but is not limited to, Team Leaders, Coordinators, and Supervisors. A Line Supervisor is also considered a worker but has additional responsibilities for implementing the WHS Management System as identified in the WHS Management System and position description.
Manager	A person is responsible for managing a functional area of the business, including the workers within the relevant functional area.
Remote Area	Area that is remote from others or isolated from the assistance of others because of the location, time, or nature of the work.

Term	Definition
Remote or Isolated Area	Work that is isolated from the assistance of other persons because of location, time, or the nature of the work. Refer to Appendix A for specific examples of activities or tasks
Risk Control	Means taking action to eliminate health and safety risks so far as is reasonably practicable, and if that is not possible, minimising the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. Eliminating a hazard will also eliminate any risk associated with that hazard.
Working Alone	A worker is undertaking work or traveling for work on their own without routine interaction with other persons because of the location, time, or nature of their work.
Worker	Worker ▪ An Employee ▪ A Contractor or Subcontractor ▪ An Employee or a Contractor or Subcontractor ▪ An Employee of a Labour Hire Company who has been assigned to work at Hunter Water ▪ An outworker ▪ An Apprentice or Trainee or Intern ▪ A Student gaining work experience ▪ A Volunteer ▪ A Worker of a prescribed class
Workplace	A place where work is carried out by or at the direction of Hunter Water and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. This consists of a vehicle, vessel, or other mobile structure.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibilities can be located in the WHSMA Manual.

Individual guidance booklets are in the Responsibility, Accountability, and Authority Manual HW2021-534.

6 General Requirements

6.1 Overview

Remote or isolated work is work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time, or nature of the work being done. Assistance from other people includes rescue, medical aid, and emergency services.

A worker may be isolated even if other people may be close by.

Examples of isolated or remote work situations that Hunter Water workers may encounter are included in Appendix A of this procedure.

7 Key Elements – Managing the Risks Associated with Remote and Isolated Work

7.1 Activities not to be Conducted Alone

The risks associated with some activities are such that the activity must not be undertaken alone.

These activities include, but are not limited to:

- Confined Space Entry
- Entering excavations or trenches
- Working at Heights or Depth
- Work on Water from a Vessel or Equivalent
- Occupational Driving
- Live Electrical Work (if authorised)
- The Operation of a Chainsaw
- Use or Disposal of Hazardous Substances where there is a significant risk of injury or exposure to the Hazardous Substance
- Controlled Burns
- Other tasks where more than one person is required to undertake the activity as determined by the requirements of the SWMS/WI associated with the remote or isolated work activity

7.2 Minimising or Eliminating the need for Remote or Isolated Work

7.2.1 Work Management

Where practicable, worker's rosters and work coordination should be used to minimise or eliminate the need for remote or isolated work. Scheduling work in remote or isolated locations so that concurrent activities are being performed to ensure that more than one worker is at the location significantly decreases remote or isolated work risks.

7.2.2 Callout and Alarm Response

A significant portion of remote or isolated work at Hunter Water results from after-hours callouts and responses to alarms.

To minimise the exposure of workers to afterhours remote or isolated work, all work teams must implement a process to monitor and review callouts and alarm response activities regularly.

When reviewing callout and alarm response activities, consideration should be given to the following:

- Frequency of the Callout
- Time of Callout
- Operational Criticality of the Callout
- Duration of the Callout
- Location of the Callout

Where callout reviews identify alarm trends or ongoing issues with Plant or Equipment, corrective actions must be implemented to eliminate or reduce the frequency of callouts or alarms.

7.3 Identification of Remote or Isolated Work

All tasks or activities undertaken at Hunter Water workplaces must be assessed to determine if the activity involves remote or isolated work.

When identifying remote or isolated work, the following must be considered:

- The length of time the person may be working alone
- The time of day when a person may be working alone
- The method and effectiveness of communication (i.e., alternate communication methods must be implemented in known mobile black spot areas)
- The location of work

- The nature of work
- The wellbeing, skills and capability of the worker

When tasks or activities are classified as remote or isolated work, the following steps must be implemented before the task or activity commences:

- Conduct a remote or isolated work risk assessment as detailed in section 5.4
- Identify appropriate and effective risk control measures
- Confirm risk control measures adequately address hazards
- Confirm risk control measures are in place before commencing the task

7.4 Remote and Isolated Work Risk Assessment

7.4.1 New Risk Assessment

When

- **Step 1 –** Hazard Identification
- **Step 2 –** Risk Assessment: Inherent Risk
- **Step 3 –** Control Risk (select using the hierarchy of controls)
- **Step 4 –** Risk Assessment with Risk Control Measures: Residual Risk
- **Step 5 –** Monitor and Review Risk Control Measures

7.4.2 Existing Risk Assessment

An existing risk assessment may be used for remote or isolated work, providing a thorough review is undertaken and any amendments are documented. In reviewing the risk assessment, the following elements must be considered:

- Were all of he risks identified in the previous risk assessment?
- Do the proposed risk controls still apply?
- Do the proposed risk controls still effectively control the risk?
- Has the workplace or environment changed in a way that introduces a new or different risk?
- Were all the risks considered in the previous assessment?

7.4.3 Outcomes of Risk Assessment

The outcome of a remote or isolated work risk assessment must be used to inform the following:

- Size and composition of the workgroup (i.e. can the work be done alone/are more workers/competent people required to undertake the work)
- Monitoring/communication tools and protocols to be implemented
- Equipment required to undertake the work safety
- First Aid requirements
- Emergency protocols

7.5 Specific Risk Control Measures

Before undertaking remote or isolated work, appropriate risk control measures must be implemented to manage the identified risks. The remote or isolated work risk classification for the task to be undertaken must guide the selection of risk control measures.

The following sections provide a selection of risk control measures available to workers to manage the risk of undertaking remote or isolated work. Additional risk control measures may be implemented to address specific risks, e.g., wet weather or high fire danger.

7.5.1 Work Group Size and Composition

Increasing the size or composition of the work group undertaking remote or isolated work is one of the most effective methods of managing risk. While this option may not be practical in all situations, it should be implemented where the remote or isolated work risk assessment indicates that the risk to worker safety is unacceptable if the work is undertaken alone.

Workers undertaking remote and isolated work must be fit to work and have the appropriate physical fitness, skills, and training for the work being undertaken.

7.5.2 Remote or Isolated Worker Monitoring

Monitoring worker movements remotely or in isolation is a critical risk control measure. Formal monitoring arrangements must be defined and implemented to maintain communication with remote or isolated workers. The extent of the monitoring arrangements will depend on the type of work to be undertaken and the outcomes of the remote or isolated work risk assessment.

7.6 Remote and Isolated Work Risk Asses

The responsibility of individual work groups is to develop monitoring arrangements for workers undertaking remote or isolated work during normal business hours.

Examples of ways monitoring can be achieved within a work group are:

- Call in/out when arriving or leaving a site (Dispatch)
- Regular check-in to an agreed point of contact at per-defined intervals (maximum of two-hour call-back intervals)
- Pre-approved journey plans
- Rosters
- Outlook calendars
- GVPS

7.7 After-Hours Monitoring

Dispatch must be used to monitor workers undertaking after-hours remote or isolated work.

Dispatch must be contacted on 0437 310 584 or 1300 675 222.

Workers must contact Dispatch before they undertake after-hours work, i.e., before they leave home to respond to an alarm.

The Dispatch operator will record the worker's details and the work to be undertaken in the dispatch log and confirm call-in/call-back arrangements

Workers contact Dispatch at agreed intervals (maximum two-hour call-back interval) or after they have completed the after-hours work, i.e., when they arrive home.

The Dispatch operator will record the details of when the work was completed in the Dispatch Log.

Where workers fail to contact Dispatch at previously agreed times, the Dispatch Operator must escalate the situation.

7.7.1 Communications

Workers who are required to work remotely or in isolation must be provided with a means of communication that enables:

- The worker to initiate a call for help in the event of an emergency (Duress pendant, EPIRB, satellite phone, pinpoint)
- The worker to initiate and maintain a check-in process by the remote or isolated work risk assessment

Where practical, the preferred method of communication should allow for voice communication.

The table below provides examples of communication devices that may be used.

Type of Devices	Suitability
Landline Phones	It is reliable and allows voice communication; however, it is only available at fixed assets. It should be used in conjunction with other risk control measures.
Mobile Phones	Allows voice communication; however, black spots exist, and it cannot always be relied on in all areas. Before implementing this as a risk control measure, network coverage maps should be consulted. It should be used in conjunction with other risk control measures. Coverage maps can be found at: **Telstra:** www.telstra.com.au/mobile-phones/coverage-networks/our-coverage **Optus:** www.optus.com.au/network/mobile/coverage **Please note:** that coverage maps should be used as a guide only. Information gathered by work groups regarding known mobile black spots must be used to guide the suitability of communication devices.
Satellite Phone	It allows voice communication and is most suitable for areas identified as black spots for mobile phone reception. The operation can be affected by a clear line of sight to satellites, damage to aerials, failure of vehicle power supplies, vehicle damage, dense overhead foliage, and heavy cloud cover. It should be used in conjunction with other risk control measures.
Emergency Positioning Indication Radio Beacons (EPIRB) and Vehicle Locating Beacon – Pin Point	For use where life-threatening emergencies may occur, to pinpoint location, and to indicate by activation of the beacon that an emergency exists. The users of this equipment need to understand that it should only be used in an emergency or as a last resort. A worker traveling in remote locations should have a voice communication system and an emergency location beacon. They are generally used for non-land-based activities. It does not allow voice communications; the device must be registered with Australian Search and Rescue (AusSAR) and Hunter Water Dispatch.
Duress Pendant	If does not allow voice communication but does allow the alarm to be raised. It has a built-in tilt device that can detect if the person holding it is in a horizontal position, such as lying on the floor. The sensor will automatically send an alarm when its position corresponds to being horizontal for a certain period. Pressing its duress button will activate a help call at any time.
Vehicle duress button	It does not allow voice communication but does allow the alarm to be raised. Pressing the vehicle duress button will activate a help call at any time.
UHF Radio	It allows voice communications but can only communicate with other UHF radio users and base stations. It should be used in conjunction with other risk control measures.

7.7.2 Supplies, Tools and Equipment

Managers must ensure that workers required to work remotely or in isolation have adequate supplies, tools, and equipment to undertake the work safely. When planning remote or isolated work, consideration should be given to the following supplies, tools, and equipment:

- Communication equipment (e.g., mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio)
- Personal Alarms (EPIRB, Pin Point, Vehicle Duress Alarm, Duress Alarm)
- First Aid Kits
- Access to Potable Water and Food
- Emergency contact numbers
- Hazard Signage
- Torches
- Batteries
- Fuel

Additional Equipment may be required depending on the remote or isolated work risk assessment outcome.

7.7.3 Escalation Process for Unaccounted for Workers

Suppose a worker does not call back or report as per the defined communication arrangements. In that case, the agreed point of contact must attempt to establish contact with the worker by calling at 5-minute intervals for 30 minutes. If contact is not made with the worker after this period, the nominated point of contact shall escalate the situation by calling Dispatch.

Dispatch will then review the incident & escalate to emergency services.

8 Training

Hunter Water must provide awareness training for workers identified as undertaking remote or isolated activities, which will be reflected in their roles in Training Needs Analysis.

9 Monitoring

Monitoring processes for this topic include:

- High Risk Audits
- Critical Element Focussed Observations
- Safe Behaviour Observations
- Field Inspections

Review processes for this topic include:

- Review of applicable injury and incident reports
- Review of hazard reports in Protecht
- Review of this standard and associated documents, Risk Register, Bow Tie diagrams following a high potential incident
- Engagement with the Field Safety Committee and any relevant sub-committees

10 Related Documents

Document ID	Document Title
Assessment	Pre-Task Risk Assessment PTRA
Standard	Consultation, Cooperation, Participation and Coordination
Standard	Fleet Management
Manual	WHSMA
Manual	Responsibility, Accountability, and Authority (HW2021-534)

11 Associated Regulations and Standards

Document ID	Document Title
Act	WHS Act 2011 (NSW)
Regulation	WHS Regulation 2017
Code of Practice	Code of Practice – How to manage work health and safety risks
Code of Practice	Code of Practice – Work Health and Safety Consultation, Cooperation and Coordination

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLES OF REMOTE OR ISOLATED WORK

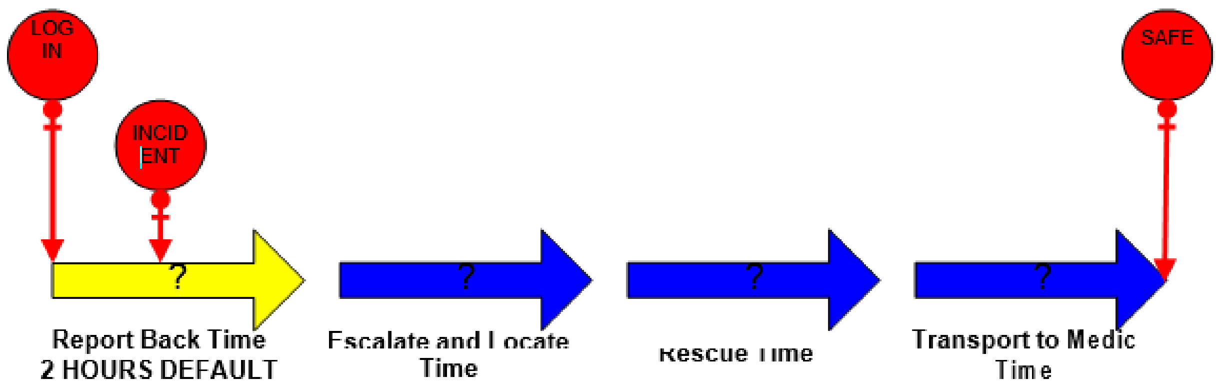
Activity	Classified as Remote or Isolated Work	Justification for Classification	Minimum Risk Control Measures
Travel by major roads (i.e., where the entire route is via roads with passing traffic expected every 15 minutes or less at the intended travel time. This may include two or more persons traveling in the same vehicle).	Not remote or isolated work for daytime driving or driving in fine weather. Assessment is required for night driving or in severe weather.	Assistance could usually be sought from or initiated by a passer-by if needed. There must be no deviation off the major route that would take the worker out of clear sight of passing traffic; otherwise, it would be considered working in isolation. This may be considered an exception during severe weather or other adverse conditions, especially if not carrying reliable communication equipment (travel to be avoided where practicable; otherwise, to be managed as working in isolation).	Night driving/severe weather: • Call-in/callout process • Pre-approved journey plan • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Torch • First Aid Kit • Vehicle duress alarm
Travel by less frequently used roads (i.e., where all or significant parts of the route are via roads with passing traffic expected less frequently than every 15 minutes at the intended time of travel; this includes two or more persons traveling in the same vehicle)	Yes	Timely assistance from a passer-by is unreliable. Where the section of travel is less frequently used roads is over a short distance, managing the activity as working in isolation may not be necessary (e.g., turning off a busy road to travel a short distance over a less used road to a manned facility or construction site).	• Call-in/callout process • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Torch • First Aid Kit • Vehicle duress alarm
A worker such as an electrician or fitter visits a water pumping station and may be required to climb down a ladder to access a dry well or pumping station or at the end of a long driveway that cannot be viewed from the street.	Yes	The worker is out of visual or audible range and, if incapacitated, is unable to seek help. All enclosed or partially enclosed spaces must be assessed to confirm if confined space controls apply	• Call-in/callout process • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Personal duress • Vehicle duress alarm • Gas Detector • Torch • First Aid Kit

A single worker visits a large reservoir site or the bore fields, closes the gate behind them, as required, and drives or walks to a location within or out of the site of the road.	Yes	The worker may quickly become out of visual or audible range and, if incapacitated, cannot seek help.	• Call-in/callout process • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Vehicle duress alarm • Gas Detector • First Aid Kit
Two workers work in regular visual or audible contact at a water treatment plant.	Assessment required	They are not working alone and, in routine circumstances, would not be considered working in isolation. If they were undertaking a task together in which they may both be impacted by an incident requiring external support initiated through an agreed point of contact, they would be considered working in isolation. In fire or extreme weather conditions or during urgent and complex plant failure, circumstances may be unpredictable and change rapidly. It would be prudent to log in with an agreed contact.	• Call-in/callout process • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Vehicle duress alarm • Gas detector (if required) • First Aid Kit
A worker walks alone around the back of a depot store to check on pipe materials when other people are on site.	Assessment required	Assess the hazards. Consider that a pipe could topple off the stand and pin the worker to the ground.	• At a minimum, let someone else know you are there and the estimated return time.
Three workers are working together to undertake a confined space entry.	Assessment required	A confined space rescue plan must be developed and rehearsed. The standby person at the location **<u>must</u>** be able to raise the alarm. Because of these conditions, they would not be considered to be working alone or in isolation. Relying solely on the agreed point of contact to initiate an alarm after exceeding the report-back time would be unacceptable.	• Call-in/callout process • Communication device (mobile phone, satellite phone, UHF radio) • Personal duress • Vehicle duress alarm • Confined space equipment as defined by the confined space risk assessment • First Aid Kit

A worker attends Office or Depot office after hours.	Assessment required	The risk is relatively low and can be reduced further by ensuring building security and providing after-hours car parking in a close and secure location.	• Workers should notify Dispatch and call on and off.
A supervisor or worker is called to a customer's property. Dispatch advised that the customer was angry and aggressive over the phone or had a history of confrontation.	Yes	Attending the customer's premises alone should be avoided where practicable.	• At a minimum, the work group attending the customer's property should consist of two workers. If required, the police may also be requested to attend.

APPENDIX B: GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING CALL BACK TIME

- In selecting a call-back time, workers and supervisors should be aware that the time selected will determine the time that will elapse before any attempt is made to locate and potentially provide aid to an incapacitated worker.
- In practice, locating the worker could take many hours from the time of an escalation/alarm, depending upon factors such as remoteness and clarity of location provided at the time of the logging. Following this, there may be a further lengthy period if a rescue has to be conducted and the worker transported to medical help if required. This sequence of events is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
- Figure 1: Lone Worker monitoring report back time sequence.



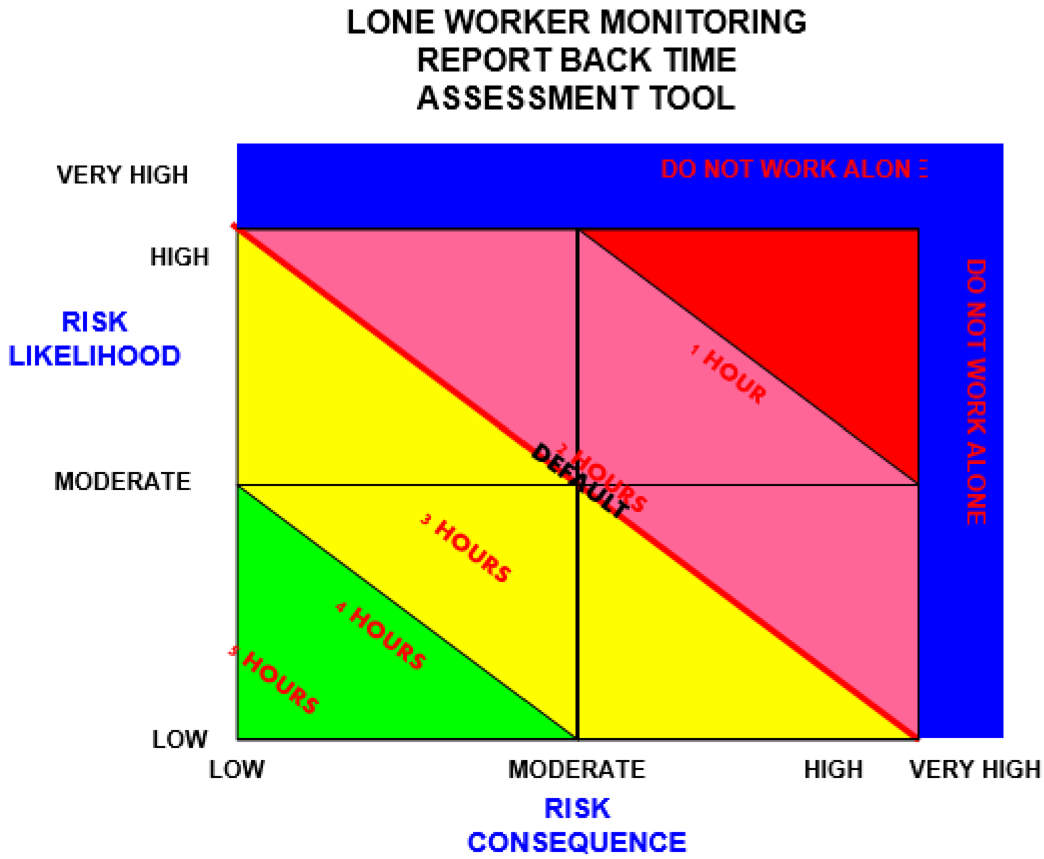
- In routine remote or isolated worker situations, the report-back intervals should typically be two hours where practicable and so far as the remote or isolated worker's communications capacity allows. The report-back interval may range from 15 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the risk associated with the activity being undertaken and the communications capacity.
- Some short-term, high-risk situations should involve a short report –report back interval, which may be as little as 15 minutes. Additional risk control measures such as duress alarms or gas detectors should be implemented in these short-term, high-risk situations. Examples of short-term, high-risk situations may include:
  - A worker changing a chlorine drum or cylinder in a single person changes over
  - Two workers investigating a chlorine alarm above 5ppm (the workers are not working alone but are working in isolation as events may unfold in which they are both affected by the chlorine leak)

Conversely, two hourly contacts may not be practicable in remote or isolated worker situations, and the report-back time may be extended. Where possible, workers working in remote or isolated situations should be provided with the means to contact an agreed point of contact at intervals no longer than 5 hours. Examples where a report-back interval beyond the typical two hours include the following:

- A worker has been working in the field for approximately 3.5 hours without available means to contact an agreed point of contact over this interval. The worker nominates a 4-hour report back time and carries a PLB or similar to raise the alarm if required
- Travel in a remote or isolated worker situation is expected to take 2.5 hours, not over a comparatively hazardous road. Suppose the driver were to nominate a 2-hour report back time. In that case, there is a risk that an unnecessary escalation would be created if the driver is unexpectedly out of communications range or forgets to report back within 2 hours. The remote or isolated worker makes a considered decision to nominate a 3-hour report back time

A report-back interval over 5 hours should only occur where the remote or isolated worker will remain out of contact range of an agreed point of contact. When out of contact range of an agreed point of contact, the remote or isolated worker will require a PLB or other means of raising the alarm.

The following assessment tool is provided for managers and supervisors to determine appropriate report-back intervals. It should only be applied in the context of local remote or isolated worker situations and having regard for their remote or lone workers' communication capacity to report to an agreed point of contact.



APPENDIX C: REMOTE AND ISOLATED WORK FLOWCHART