Working Alone Procedure
Native Forest Operations Queensland

Purpose

The purpose of the Native Forest Operations (State Forest) Working Alone Procedure is to help manage workplace risks associated with working alone, remotely or in isolated work in Queensland.

The Native Forest Operations (State Forest) Working Alone Procedure, hereon referred to as the Working Alone Procedure, is intended to be utilised in hardwood and cypress forest operations in Queensland, where businesses do not currently have a working alone procedure in place.

This procedure can be utilised by any worker including all permittees, contractors and subcontractors working in forest operations in Queensland (known as the workplace).

Safety Statement

We aim and commit to provide and maintain safe systems of work for all workers, including those who work alone, remotely or in isolation.

A **person conducting a business or undertaking** must ensure, so far as is **reasonably practicable**, that the health and safety of other persons is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.

Definitions

The following summarised definitions are relevant to workers who work alone, remotely or in isolation.

Duty Holder – responsible for identifying reasonably foreseeable hazards and must ensure to as reasonably practical that these are eliminated or minimised. There may be multiple duty holders, depending on the forest operation.

Remote or Isolated work –work that is isolated from the assistance of other people because of the location, time or nature of the work being done. Isolated work may involve a geographically isolated area, on or off site, either during or outside normal working hours. Remote work may involve work activities where there are few people and where communications and travel are difficult.

Workplace – any place where work is carried out and includes any place where a worker goes or is likely to be, while at work.

Workers – a person is a worker if the carries out work in any capacity for a Person Conducting Business or Undertaking. Workers and other people at the workplace must take reasonable care for their own health and safety, co-operate with reasonable policies, procedures, and instructions, and not adversely affect other people's health and safety.

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Refer to the *Work Health and Safety Act* 2011, *Work Health and Safety Regulations* 2011 orTimber Queensland's Introduction to Work, Health, and Safety for definitions of:

- *Primary Duty of Care*
- *Person Conducting Business or Undertaking (PCBU)*. For forestry operations this includes:
  - Landowners and forest managers who engage contractors to harvest and transport forest products
  - Contractors and timber business owners that harvest, process and transport forest products
- *Reasonably Practicable*

Legislative Requirements
Key points relevant to remote or isolated work (known as working alone) have been extracted from relevant sections within the following legislation:

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Detailed in Section 19 – in summary the PCBU, so far as reasonably practical, must ensure:

- Provision and maintenance of a work environment without risks to health and safety
- Safe plant and structures
- Safe systems of work
- Safe use, handling and storage of plant and structures
- Adequate access to facilities
- Provision of any information, training, instruction, and supervision
- Health and safety are monitored, and illness and injury are prevented

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011
- A PCBU must manage risks to the health and safety of a worker associated with remote or isolated work
- In minimising the risk to the health and safety of workers associated with remote or isolated work, a PCBU must provide a system of work that includes effective communication with the worker

Code of Practice for Forest Harvesting 2007
- No worker is required to work alone during felling and extraction unless there is a high standard of safety in place. For example, where an operator where an operator is conducting work entirely within a properly equipped and guarded machine, or with an effective means of communication available
- Any person required to work alone has and uses an established daily report-in schedule

Safe Work Australia Guides
The following Safe Work Australia guides provide information to ensure compliance with the relevant work, health, and safety legislation.

- Forestry: Guide to managing risks of general hazards in forestry operations
- General Guide for managing risks in forestry operations.

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Risk Management
A duty holder must aim to adopt an ongoing step-by-step risk management approach, in consultation with all workers who are working alone to:
- Identify hazards
- Conduct a risk assessment
- Eliminate hazards and minimise the risk
- Develop a written and agreed procedure and then implement

Identify Hazards
Under the WHS Regulations we have a duty to identify reasonably foreseeable hazards. A list of reasonably foreseeable hazards relevant to forestry operations may include:
- Emergency events
- Poor communication
- Unauthorised access
- Medical conditions
- Fatigue and boredom
- Adverse road conditions
- Slips, trips, and falls
- Adverse weather conditions
- Reduced visibility
- Insects, nests, snakes
- Mobile plant operation
- Hazardous limbs and trees
- Manual felling
- Working at night

Assess Risks
A duty holder must assess risks. To assess risks, implement a step-by-step risk management process for each hazard identified.

Minimise the Risk
A duty holder must implement controls to eliminate hazards or minimise risk (reduce risk). The Hierarchy of Control is recommended to reduce risk, including eliminate, substitute, isolate, administrative controls and implement PPE. One control, or a combination of controls can be used to reduce risk.

For further information on reducing risk refer to the WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulations 2011 or the Timber Queensland Introduction to Work, Health, and Safety.

A list of forestry-based controls to eliminate hazards or minimise the risk may include:

Relevant documents, training and qualifications
- Implement Working Alone Procedure
- Implement Safety Management System (SMS), Emergency Procedure and Site-Specific Safety Plan (SSSP)
- Developing safe work method statements (SWMS) for remote or isolated work
- Hazard reporting and monitoring process
- First aid qualification and equipment

Fatigue management
- Take adequate rest and break times during work and travel hours

Access to equipment
- First aid kits
- Utilise PPE
- Use correct ergonomic set up in machines and vehicles
- Access to food and water

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Work arrangements
- To ensure people are not working alone by working in pairs or groups

Implementing the buddy system
- Maintain regular communication
- Check a worker has returned to their base or home

Implementing check-ins
- Determine a check-in procedure for those working alone, preferably occurring in less than 2-hour intervals. Check-in via:
  - Telephone
  - Two-way radio
  - Text messages

Accessible emergency communication
- Personal location beacons, or EPIRBs
- Devices to raise an alarm when an emergency occurs

Implementing other technology
- GPS tracking devices
- Satellite phones
- Alarm systems
- Automatic reminders

The following activities may pose greater risk and therefore additional controls are identified:

Working at night
- Use artificial lighting
- Adhere to operating hours
- Install lighting on log trucks
- Designated work areas to work in the dark

Hand/manual felling
- Check in before and after using chainsaw
- Use PPE
- Personal location beacons
- Avoid activity when working alone

Develop Written/Agreed Procedure

All forestry-based controls should be agreed in consultation with the person conducting business or undertaking (PCBU) and should be written into the **Timber Queensland Working Alone Form** (see base of this document)**,** or equivalent.

Implement Working Alone Procedure

All forestry-based risk, hazards and controls should be frequently assessed, and the Timber Queensland Working Alone Form or equivalent working alone procedure template should be updated to reflect any changes.

Ensure a review process occurs for working alone to ensure there is continual improvement.

Furthermore, ensure that all incidents and near misses are reported, so the required changes can be identified and implemented.

Instructions to the Timber Queensland Working Alone Form -
- Complete 1 x form per person and per site (sales area)
- Complete this form as the duty holder, in consultation with the PCBU and any other relevant workers
- Complete the form digitally using PDF editing software like Adobe Acrobat, or print out and complete by hand.
- Use this Working Alone Procedure, and any other relevant legislation and guides to assist completing it
- New hazards, risks and controls may be added later (provide initials for amendment)
- A new form may be required if there are significant changes (including hazards) to the site or operation
- Implement the Working Alone Form.

Working Alone Form

TIMBER QUEENSLAND
We build Queensland

YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

First Name [   ]   **Last Name** [   ]

Company [   ]   **Phone** [   ]

Permittee [   ]   [   ]

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Contact 1 [   ]   **Phone** [   ]

Contact 2 [   ]   **Phone** [   ]

LOCATION INFORMATION

State Forest [   ]   **MUID** [   ]

Region [   ]   **Reception** ☐ **No** ☐ **Yes**

FOREST OPERATION

What type of forest operation are you undertaking?

☐ Manual Harvest   ☐ Roading

☐ Mechanical Harvest   ☐ Snigging/extracting

☐ Haulage   ☐ Other_____

IDENTIFY HAZARDS, ASSESS RISKS AND IMPLEMENT CONTROLS

Complete the following table of hazards, risks and controls for working alone (refer to the <u>TQ Working Alone Procedure</u> for assistance)

Hazard	Risk	Control/s

Working Alone Form

OPERATION SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

Do you have a Site Specific Safety Plan? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unsure

Do you have a Safety Management System? ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Unsure

Have you identified hazards? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Have you identified controls for all hazards ? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Have you considered the following hazard controls?

☐ Equipment- first aid, PPE etc   ☐ Understanding systems, policies and procedures

☐ Fatigue management   ☐ Relevant training and qualifications

☐ Documents (SMS, SSSP)   ☐ Others_____

Which of the specific working alone controls will be implemented?

☐ Check-in Procedure (every ☐ hours)   ☐ Work Arrangements

☐ Communication (UHF, phone)   ☐ Buddy System

☐ Alert and Location Systems   ☐ Others_____

Please list any information or additional comments about the controls that will be implemented when working alone (or isolated)

[ ]

Name [_____] **Signed** [_____] [/ /]

Upon completion of this document, ensure the PCBU or permittee receives a copy.

Refer to the following documents for assistance:
- Timber Queensland Native Forest Operations Working Alone Procedure
- *Work, Health, and Safety Act 2011*
- *Work, Health and Safety Regulations 2011*
- Safe Work Australia Guides

Working Alone Form

ADDITIONAL HAZARDS, RISKS AND CONTROLS

Hazard	Risk	Control

Disclaimer
Information provided in this document is for general guidance only, it does not replace Commonwealth and State Government legislation. This field guide has been developed for Queensland state forests, however some of the information and controls may assist private native forestry operations to meet legal obligations.