

2017



MEAT INDUSTRY STANDARD: WORKING ALONE

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1 Introduction



Working Alone

Working alone creates risk because workers are undertaking work without assistance and so may place themselves at risk or be without help if they have an accident. Because working alone multiplies the risks of serious injury or death it is identified as a critical risk for the meat processing industry.

This standard lays out the basic processes for clarifying roles and responsibilities, identifying hazards, assessing risks, and implementing controls to eliminate or minimise the risks of working alone.

This standard draws on international experience and merges this with the relevant New Zealand regulations coming into force under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

Please note that these are minimum standards and companies may (and are encouraged to) go beyond any or all of the standards in order to control risks 'so far as is reasonably practicable'.

This is a working document. This document and the subsequent family of documents will evolve over time for example to reflect changes in industry practice and regulation.

Note: This document represents **guidance only** for managers and supervisors in managing workplace health and safety in the meat industry. It is not legal advice and does not replace or amend an individual or collective employment agreement or a PCBU health and safety policy. If a member company of MIA cannot achieve a particular standard it is recommended that they conduct a risk assessment outlining their additional controls that will be used to manage the hazard.

Neither the Meat Industry Association Inc or its members, take responsibility for the results or any actions taken on the basis of the information contained in these Standards, or for any error or omissions.

1.1 Basic principles

Our workers are required to work alone from time to time and because people working alone are often in isolated areas, undertaking repair or cleaning work, or outside normal working hours, the potential risk of existing hazards is increased and extra controls are needed.

- Special arrangements must be made to minimise this risk, especially after normal working hours, as these circumstances pose an additional risk to workers.
- Appropriate procedures must be in place to minimise the risk of injury or illness associated with working alone.
- Additional or specific training for working alone should be considered.
- Where workers are working alone there must be some form of monitoring or alert system put in place.
- **Critical or High-Risk Work is not permitted to be undertaken by persons working alone.**

2 Roles & Responsibilities

2.1 Duties of the PCBU

The PCBU must ensure that any work that involves the potential for harm (risk) related to working alone is controlled and made safe, so far as reasonably practicable. This means:

- a) Provision of training in procedures related to working alone; and
- b) Provision of all safety equipment, devices and/or systems to protect safety when working alone; and
- c) A system of controlling the work to ensure procedures are followed and the work is completed as planned and authorised; and
- d) A method of ensuring all workers including contractors and subcontractors have access to all the above and are deemed competent to work alone prior to commencement.

The company is responsible for assigning someone to ensure the PCBU complies with its health and safety duties towards workers at a site – depending on the company, this can be the senior manager at that site.

2.2 Responsibilities by role

Role	Responsibilities
PCBU	As above
Officers	Officers must exercise due diligence to make sure that the PCBU complies with its health and safety duties.
General Manager	The General Manager must ensure: • This Standard is kept up to date and distributed to all relevant staff. • The requirements of this standard are adhered to.
Line Managers / Team Leaders	Line Managers and Supervisors are responsible for the immediate actions required to control H&S risk in their areas of control, in particular: • Identifying the working alone tasks that are likely to be a risk to health and safety • Assessing the risks and using effective controls to minimise working alone situations • Re-assessing the risks on a regular basis or when there has been a significant change in working practice • Reviewing the effectiveness of the controls • Providing information and training for staff about working alone
Health and Safety Manager/Advisor	The Health and Safety Manager/Advisor are responsible for: • Providing assistance, advice and guidance on hazard and risk management requirements.

Role	Responsibilities
All workers	Workers are responsible for taking all reasonable and necessary precautions for their own health and safety when in a working alone environment and ensuring: • The requirements of this standard are applied. • They never perform any task where there is a risk of harm to themselves or other workers (seek further advice from a Supervisor or Manager before commencing) • All hazardous energy hazard controls followed correctly and consistently and safe work practices they have been trained in are followed • The reporting of any uncontrolled hazards they see to their immediate supervisor • The use of safety equipment provided. If protective safety devices are provided, these must be used. • The reporting of any hazardous energy incidents using their site's incident reporting system.

3 Identify Hazards and Assess the Risk

In general, workers should not be working alone unless necessary. Nevertheless, there are situations in meat processing where workers work by themselves, such as yardies, cleaners, security guards, chiller and loadout operators, etc. Where workers are alone, consider the risks they face:

Considerations of risk:

- Does the workplace present a specific risk to the lone worker, for example due to temporary access equipment, such as portable ladders or trestles that one person would have difficulty handling?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person, e.g. for a lone person working out of hours where the workplace could be locked up?
- Is there machinery involved in the work that one person cannot operate safely?
- Does the work involve lifting objects too large for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence and/or aggression?
- Are there any reasons why the individual might be more vulnerable than others and be particularly at risk if they work alone (for example if they are young, pregnant, disabled or a trainee)?
- If the lone worker's first language is not English, are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communications, especially in an emergency?
- What is a reasonable length of time for the person to be alone?
- How long will the person be alone?
- What time of the day will the person be alone?
- What forms of communication are available?
- Is the work in a remote or isolated location?
- Is there adequate training and education provided for the person to be able to work alone safely?
- Is there adequate personal protective equipment available? Is it in good working order?
- What machinery, tools or equipment will be used? Will there be moving machinery? Can any machinery catch or crush a person?
- Is there a high-risk activity involved?
- Is fatigue likely to be a factor?
- Are there extremes of temperature?
- Are there any pre-existing medical conditions that may increase the risk?

Employers should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents.

**Hazard**

Be aware that some tasks may be too difficult or dangerous to be carried out by a lone worker. High or Critical risk activities are not permitted to be undertaken by persons working alone. This includes activities such as:

- Handling of hazardous substances
- Confined spaces entry
- Working at height activities
- Heavy physical labour
- Work with heavy machinery



Photo 1. Appropriate site lighting is very important.



Photo 2. Site security should be adequate

4 Implement the controls

If it is not reasonably practicable for a PCBU to eliminate identified risks, the PCBU must implement risk-control measures. Managers should use the following hierarchy for managing the prevention of harm from working alone:

- **Eliminate the risks: Good job design is essential and provides the most effective opportunity to eliminate risk.** The preferred option is to eliminate the risk completely i.e. make sure the person isn't working alone wherever possible! Even where this cannot be done the safety of the users should be a foremost consideration and the machine designed to promote safety (rather than safety systems designed to accommodate the machine/equipment) wherever possible.
- **Minimise the risks:** Where risks from working alone hazards cannot be eliminated and risk to safety remains you must consider and implement additional controls. Please note that this is a far lower level of protection and requires a high level of worker competency and must be performed under authorisation only.

Irrespective of the type of controls, they should be supported with measures to make sure:

- Everyone on site understands and uses the controls; and
- The controls are working; and
- The controls remain effective.

Remember, a PCBU must ensure through effective supervision and monitoring that the control measures are effective and are maintained. There must be regular reviews of the risks and controls.

4.1 Typical controls

Control	Description
Working Alone Plan	Document a plan that sets out all the Hazards and their risks and the controls to be put in place for managing these.
Training and competency	Workers who work alone must receive appropriate training and be familiar with emergency procedures
Timing	Schedule higher risk tasks to be done during normal business hours, or when another worker capable of helping in an emergency is present.
Emergency Plan	A clear emergency plan for managing any potential emergency events.
Check-in procedure	Establish a check-in procedure as part of the Working Alone Plan. • Schedule rostered routine check-ups, at agreed time intervals • Ensure this is documented as part of the Working Alone Plan.

Control	Description
Communications	Make sure that regular contact is kept with workers through: • A Buddy system; • Personal emergency wristbands (with a button raising an alarm with security. These can include timers to automatically call for assistance if the button hasn't been pushed for a period of time); • Call button to a specific person (such as to site security); • GPS tracker; • Radio, with routine check-ups (such as with site security) organised; • Radios, with Lone Worker functionality activated (these can include timers to automatically call for assistance if the button hasn't been pushed for a period of time). Man Down functions are also available. • Provision of a monitoring device and ensuring it is monitored; • Monitored remote surveillance system (e.g. closed circuit TV);

4.2 Working Alone Plan

Ensure the following are addressed:

- Specify the time intervals for checking on the worker. Higher risk activities require shorter time intervals between communications with the contact person;
- Specify the person responsible for contacting the worker and recording the results of the contact;
- Outline the process to be followed if the worker cannot be contacted, including provisions for an emergency rescue; and
- Provide for checking with the worker at the end of the worker's shift.

4.3 Communication & Monitoring



Good practice

Procedures must be put in place to monitor lone workers as effective means of communication are essential. These may include:

- Supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone;
- Pre-agreed intervals of regular contact between the lone worker and supervisor, using phones, radios or email, bearing in mind the worker's understanding of English;
- Manually operated or automatic warning devices which trigger if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker, e.g. staff security systems;
- Implementing robust system to ensure a lone worker has returned to their base or home once their task is completed.

4.3.1 Communication

The appropriate method of communication should be evaluated to ensure the most practical and effective means of communication.

4.3.2 Check in Procedure

Managers must ensure any employee working alone follows a check in procedure based on a risk assessed frequency. Critical risk tasks must not be performed alone.

When working alone including travelling out of the office/workplace, the main contact person should know the following details:

- Destination,
- Estimated time of arrival,
- Return time or date,
- Contact information,
- Mode of travel (public transit, car, plane, etc.) and,
- Alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc.

A daily work plan should be outlined in Working Alone Plan Template so it is known where the lone employee will be and when. One main person identified to be the contact, plus a backup. The circumstances the lone employee will check in and how often based on a risk assessment of the task outlined in the daily work plan.

The visual check or call-in schedule must be adhered to and a written log of contact is advised. The contact person must call or visit the lone employee periodically to make sure he or she is okay if they are not contacted by the lone employee. A code word should be used to identify or confirm that help is needed.

4.4 Emergency Plan

An emergency action plan to be followed if the lone employee does not check-in when he or she is supposed to. Ensure the plan is clear, known by all relevant employees (including the lone worker and those listed as emergency contacts).



Consider

- Arrangement with security personnel to contact lone workers on site if check-in has not occurred
- Security personnel may well be a lone worker themselves so ensure that there are arrangements to ensure their safety and wellbeing (overlapping duties with another PCBU if they are a contracted worker).



Photo 3. Security personnel may be included as part of the emergency contact process and will also need their own plan if working on site alone.

4.5 Check-In Frequency

Each supervisor must develop check-in frequencies for all workers working alone that is specific to their own work area. The minimum check-in requirement for low-risk activities is at the start and end of each shift for all workers. For those that are working alone and returning straight home notify your manager or 'nominated check in person'.

Table 1. Check in frequency table (example only)

Tasks	Check-in Frequency
High/Critical Risk Tasks	Not Applicable – Must not be working alone.
Moderate Risk Tasks	Every 20 minutes (shorter intervals if required)
Low Risk Tasks	Every 1 – 4 hours (shorter intervals if required)

Shorter intervals e.g. 10 or 15 minutes may be preferable for certain tasks e.g. freezer work and these intervals should be agreed in the Working Alone Plan.

4.6 Training & competency

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help uncertain situations. The workers should be deemed competent in:

- All tasks to be completed while working alone
- Emergency procedures
- Communication protocols
- Following a Working Alone Plan



Photo 4. Emergency procedures readily accessible and understood



Photo 5. Reliable communication devices such as radios, cell phones etc required

5 Reference Documents



Further information

- New Zealand's key work health and safety legislation is the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) and regulations made under that Act. Compliance with all statutory requirements with the HSWA Act 2015 and other applicable acts and/or regulations is mandatory.
- New Zealand 'Codes of practice' (CoP or ACoP) are documents that offer an approved method of achieving compliance with regulatory requirements. A code of practice will tell you how to meet the Act or regulation requirements and controls in a way that is legally defensible. They are not mandatory and you can adopt other ways of meeting the requirements instead.
- 'Good Practice Guidelines' (GPG) are a guide to what WorkSafe New Zealand considers good practice. Health and safety inspectors may use these guidelines when visiting workplaces or conducting investigations.
- Other types of guidance including webpages, fact sheets or brochures is provided for information only. Compliance to these forms of guidance may have little bearing under the law.

5.1 Relevant legislation & regulations

Includes, but are is not limited to:

Health and Safety At Work Act 2015 (HSAW Act 2015)

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/latest/DLM5976660.html>

Health and Safety at Work (General Risk and Workplace Management) Regulations 2016

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2016/0013/latest/DLM6727530.html>

5.2 Codes, Standards & Guidance

5.2.1 New Zealand

Code of practice/Good practice guidelines from WorkSafe (the Regulator):

- None currently available (as at 7 July 2017)
- Other resources listed below.

Protecting employees who work alone (webpage) – Employment New Zealand

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/starting-employment/rights-and-responsibilities/protecting-employees-who-work-alone/>

5.2.2 Other countries

Out of sight, out of mind? Research into the Occupational Safety and Health of Distributed Workers (Webpage and downloadable resources) - Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), UK

<https://www.iosh.co.uk/outofsight>

Working alone: Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working (Fact sheet) – Health & Safety Executive (HSE), UK

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.htm>

Remote and isolated work (Webpage) – SafeWork Australia

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/remote-work>

Code of practice for managing the work environment and facilities (downloadable document) – SafeWork Australia (refer to section 4.2)

<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/model-code-practice-managing-work-environment-and-facilities>

Working Alone (Webpage) – WorkSafe Victoria, Australia

<http://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/pages/safety-and-prevention/health-and-safety-topics/working-alone>

6 Appendix 1: Working Alone Plan (Example only)

A Working Alone Plan is required for all circumstances where employees are required to work alone. High/Critical risk work must not be undertaken. A Working Alone Plan must be completed by the Supervisor & Employee together. It is the Supervisor's responsibility to identify any hazards/hazardous activities which arise from the conditions/circumstances of the worker's work.

Job and Task Information	Job Number		Date (Plan written):	
Work description (be specific)	Clearly describe the nature of the work.			
Conditions/Circumstances	What are the conditions or circumstances under which the employee is required to work alone?			
Work site		Location		
Commencement Date		Estimated Start & Finish Times		
Employee Name		Phone No. of Employee		
Employee Emergency Contact 1		Phone No. Emergency Contact 1		
Employee Emergency Contact 2		Phone No. Emergency Contact 2		
Competency of Employee	(To undertake task safely alone)			
Supervisor		Phone No. of Supervisor		
Alternative PCBU Contact		Phone No. of Alternative Contact		
Communication Plan		Emergency Plan (Be specific)		
Outline the agreed communication plan for this working alone event.		Outline the emergency plan and the plan to assist the employee in an emergency		
Contact numbers:				
Methods of communication:				
Check in Frequency (e.g. Low risk: every 1 -4 hours, Moderate Risk: every 20 minutes)? (note HIGH RISK WORK MUST NOT BE COMPLETED ALONE)				

DRAFT ONLY**WORKING ALONE**

Duties	Hazards	Controls	Responsibility
What are the types of duties to be conducted?	What are the potential hazards/limitations & prohibitions?	What are the controls to minimise these risks?	Who is responsible?

Plant and Equipment Required	PPE Required	Training Required
List all equipment required for the task.	Personal Protective Equipment/Clothing required for the task.	List all training required for the task.

Sign by both parties once plan agreed. Your signature is your commitment to adhere to the plan laid out within this document.

Signed by Supervisor		Date	
Signed by Employee		Date	

Maintain Check-In record below throughout the entire working alone/in isolation period.

Check-in Record		
Check-in Times	Comments	Signature
Start:		

Check-in Record		
Check-in Times	Comments	Signature