



## **New Zealand SDA Conferences Working Alone in Safety**



**2020**

The following is general information likely to assist PCBU's or their Leadership in taking all reasonable practicable steps to ensure the safety of their members or others under their direction or control who may be working alone or at risk in such circumstances.

### **What is meant by 'working alone'?**

A person is alone when working or present at a facility when they are on their own; when they cannot be seen or heard by another person; and when they cannot expect a visit from another member.

It is important to consider all situations carefully. Working alone includes all members who may go for a period of time where they do not have direct contact with other members. For example, the receptionist in the Church facility may be considered a "lone" worker. Alternatively, a caretaker who is doing maintenance work that cannot be seen by co-members may also be considered a lone worker.

### **Is working alone a problem?**

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when other circumstances are present. Whether a situation is a high or low risk will depend on the location, type of work, interaction with the public, or the consequences of an emergency, accident, injury, etc. This wide variety of circumstances makes it important to assess each situation individually.

### **What are examples of high risk activities?**

High risk activities can involve risks from a variety of sources such as those below:

- at heights,
- with electricity,
- with hazardous substances or materials,
- with hazardous equipment such as chainsaws or firearms,
- with the public, where there is a potential for violence.

### **What can be done to help a lone worker stay safe?**

Check Government and local body regulations concerning working alone.

There are many steps that can be taken to help ensure the safety of the lone worker:

- Assess the hazards of your workplace.
- Talk to members about their work. Get their input about the work they do and possible solutions.
- Investigate incidents at your facility, and those from similar facilities.
- Avoid having a lone work whenever possible, especially for jobs with a recognized risk.
- Take corrective action to prevent or minimize the potential risks of working alone.
- Provide appropriate training and education.
- Report all situations, incidents or 'near misses' where being alone increased the severity of the situation. Analyze this information and make changes to Church policy where necessary.

- Establish a check-in procedure. Make sure that regular contact is kept with all members working in the Church facility. Establish ways to account for people (visually or verbally) while they are working.
- Schedule higher risk tasks to be done during normal business hours, or when another member capable of helping in an emergency is present.

### **What is an example of a check-in procedure?**

It is important that a check-in procedure be in place. Decide if a verbal check-in is adequate, or if the employee must be accounted for by a visual check. Make sure your plan is appropriate for both regular business hours as well as after main office hours.

For most lone workers, the telephone will be the main source of contact. If you work at a desk or station, have a telephone close by. If you are away from a main office undertaking maintenance work, the use of a cell phone is very helpful. If a cell phone is unreliable in your area, be sure to have alternative methods of communication available (such as use of public telephones, site visits or satellite technology).

### **When travelling or working away from the office, the main contact person should know the following details:**

- Your destination,
- estimated time of arrival,
- return time ,
- contact information,
- mode of travel (public transit, car, plane, etc.) and,
- alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc.

### **Communication:**

- What forms of communication are available?
- Is it necessary to "see" the person, or is voice communication adequate?
- Will emergency communication systems work properly in all situations?
- If the communication systems are located in a vehicle, do you need alternative arrangements to cover the person when they are away from the vehicle?

### **Location of the work:**

#### **Off site work & travel (i.e. Church Leaders & Pastors)**

- Could the work they do be considered in a remote or isolated location? Remember that a remote location does not have to be far away.
- Is transportation necessary to get there? What kind of transportation is needed?
- Is the vehicle equipped with emergency supplies such as food and drinking water, as well as a first aid kit and fire extinguisher?
- Will the person need to carry some or all of the emergency supplies with them when they leave the vehicle?
- Does the person need training to be able to use the first aid and fire extinguisher equipment?
- What are the consequences if the vehicle breaks down?

- Will the person have to leave the vehicle for long periods of time?
- What are the dangers likely to be faced if they will be interacting with members of the public?

### **Characteristics required by the individual who is working alone**

- Are there any pre-existing medical conditions that may increase the risk?
- Does the person have adequate levels of experience and training? (For example: first aid, communication systems repair, vehicle breakdowns, relevant administrative procedures, and good interpersonal skills?)

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