

*Insight* aims to provide useful information, links and tips in the areas of Risk Management, Work Health and Safety, Business Continuity Management, and other areas relating to management systems and corporate governance.

## Are you really prepared?

Without wanting to sound too clichéd, there is a definite need at this time of year to ensure you are prepared for an emergency.

In auditing a range of industries across the state QRMC's consultants commonly see that most organisations have their ducks all in row in relation to fire and evacuation. However, there are often gaps in terms of preparing for 'non-traditional' emergencies.

Sec 43 of the (Model) *WHS Regulation* prescribes a duty on the PCBU to implement and test their emergency plan, while in Queensland this requirement is strengthened in the *Building Fire Safety Regulation* (Sec 44) that mandates the need for training and an annual evacuation practice.

Naturally these dominate the thought processes when it comes to emergency preparedness and in many cases the key driver is compliance rather than really testing the efficacy of the system.

In addition for workplaces undertaking Confined Space entry or work at heights there is typically some practicing of the emergency rescue procedures (as per sec 74 & sec 80 respectively).

All this is absolutely necessary, but if we take a step backwards and consider the regularly referenced Australian Standard for *Planning for Emergencies* (AS 3745—2010) there is a requirement to identify, complete a risk assessment and analyse potential emergencies likely to impact the operations, then develop plans to prepare for and mitigate the impact of these emergencies.

AS3745 (s) 7.1 then specifies that "a program of site-specific emergency response exercises shall be developed ... to determine the effectiveness of the emergency response procedures, ECO actions and occupants' response".

In operationalising these requirements many organisations have developed detailed instructions and 'grab-and-go' guides to structure their response to specific emergencies. However, while these may cater for localised events like medical emergencies, power outages, bomb threats, armed hold-ups or



active shooters, or the broader range of natural events or disasters (severe storms, flooding and even cyclones in the more northerly reaches), the workplace's response to these events is not usually practiced.

QRMC has no doubt that most workplaces know what to do when their fire alarms go off, but is there the same level of confidence in responding to other types of events that may not require an evacuation of the workplace? Please [contact QRMC](#) for more information.

## Remote/Isolated Work and Journey Management

When considering the risks associated with your day-to-day work activities, one risk that often gets taken for granted or even overlooked altogether is getting to your destination safely in the first place.

For most of us this often involves driving or commuting a short distance, and in the event of a need for immediate assistance, help is not far from hand, either in person from people nearby or via a quick phone call.

For some however, where distances are greater, work sites more geographically remote or isolated, and where mobile phone signal is patchy or non-existent, simply reaching your destination presents significant risks.



If your work takes you to or through a remote location, would your Manager know if you didn't get to the worksite safely? And just as importantly, would they know if you didn't make it home?

The evolution of *Journey Plans* has sought to incorporate an approach that (as the name suggests) requires workers to plan their work-related journeys and to consider the risks associated with the journey to and from site. Where a risk is identified, the Journey Plan records the intended strategies and controls to eliminate or reduce the risk.

For work in, or travelling through, remote and isolated areas (typically areas where there is no mobile phone signal, infrequent passing traffic to

provide assistance, or locations where a worker may be alone for long periods) consideration must be given to providing an effective communication system that alerts management and ensures assistance can be engaged in the event of an emergency.

A number of communication tools can provide this function including satellite phones and UHF/VHF radios, and these days also GPS spot trackers, satellite sleeves, man-down pendants and journey management apps.

One of the major benefits to using GPS spot trackers and journey management apps is their ability to pinpoint a worker's location. Another major benefit is their functional capability to send automatic reminders for workers to regularly "check-in", and an escalation process that is automatically initiated when check-ins don't occur. Should emergency assistance be needed, valuable time is saved through earlier communications and first-responders are easily able to locate injured workers.

How does your workplace ensure workers are able to access emergency assistance when working remotely?

Please [contact QRMC](#) for assistance in relation to the management of the risks associated with working in geographically remote or isolated locations.