



Parks and Regions Group – Safety Bulletin

Number 4/2017

Welcome to the Safety Bulletin for the Parks & Regions Group. This bulletin is produced by the staff from SA Murray-Darling Basin Region and their WHS Committee on behalf of the Group's Workplace Health and Safety Committee, keeping staff updated on new workplace safety initiatives, the theme of the quarter and other information in regards to workplace safety.

*"Safety within the Group is vital and improving safety to all Group staff is of highest priority.
Look after your workmates!"*

Quarterly Theme – SAFE DRIVING - THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

"Happy safe travels"

Whenever you use a motor vehicle to facilitate your work you are required to follow DEWNR procedures. Do you understand the various procedures well enough to differentiate what is required of you under different circumstances? Can you explain to someone else what communications are necessary when travelling on a day of heightened fire danger? How about when going to work in a remote or isolated area? Working alone?

One requirement that is common in all driving-related procedures is the need to ensure effective communications are maintained regardless of your experience, how often you drive, or the distances you travel.



Here are some important things to consider:

Choose the right communication equipment: The type of equipment chosen and how often it is to be used will vary depending where you are going, who you are travelling with, the area you will be traversing, weather conditions/season etc.

Communication always involves at least one other person: the minimum level of communication requires the exchange of knowledge about departure and arrival times. Further, it also means the information must be received by another person and the receipt of your message is confirmed (exchange of information back to you) within an 'acceptable' period.

Plan your communication prior to driving: DEWNR procedures are clear about the need and requirement for good planning and preparation prior to driving.

Ensure communication planning matches the level of risk: Ensuring reliable communications becomes more important as risks increase. In some circumstances (e.g. for a leisurely cruise on a beautiful day to attend a meeting at a neighbouring site), it may be acceptable to make just one call back to your office on reaching your destination to notify of your safe arrival but in other circumstances that level of communication may be wholly insufficient.

Go above and beyond if you need to: DEWNR's formal procedures establish a minimum standard that must be met but there is nothing preventing your team introducing additional measures. However, if introducing additional steps, a more comprehensive assessment of travel risk is probably called for and a Local Safe Working Procedure developed.

Think practically: Communications strategies that are too elaborate, or differ widely from what most teams use, can create their own risks. An ideal plan is generally one that is easily understood, is robust and has contingency options, and contains risk minimisation measures adequate for the task to be undertaken without unnecessary burden.

Embed safe driving into the culture of your team: You will be familiar with the saying "breaking habits is hard to do". By getting into a routine of doing things the correct way, the routine can quickly become a habit. It doesn't have to be onerous.



As a team:

- determine the types of environment your team ventures into and what type/s of equipment will ensure constant coverage in those areas
- formulate an agreed plan that everyone will adhere to
- consider the use of whiteboards as an easy, visual tool you can use as part of an overall procedure
- think about call-in arrangements: how often, contact person/people, allow for contingencies (what if's)

IMPORTANT - consider what response steps are required if communication attempts fail or a member of staff has not called in at the designated time.

Use the communication method and procedures that are right for the level of driving risk:

Is there just one method (and equipment) we can adopt to meet the requirements of all driving situations? The short answer is 'yes', however, common sense indicates this would be introducing a large degree of overkill in most situations and resistance to comply. It is reasonable to expect a higher level of precaution in high risk situations, and DEWNR's procedures reflect incremental measures accordingly.

DEWNR Safe Driving Procedure

DEWNR's safe driving procedure requires (in situations when driving alone) "As a minimum, a reliable system of communication should be available and drivers must confirm a basic journey plan with their manager including the expected time of return."

It follows that:

- your manager is aware of the planned journey – i.e. expected route and time of departure and arrival,
- your manager will assume responsibility if the expected time of return lapses and your safety status is unknown,

and

- a 'reliable' system of communication is one that will work within the area of travel. Ordinarily, a mobile telephone would suffice and must be available for contact if needed.

DEWNR Remote and Isolated Work Procedure

A higher order of communications may be required to meet situations of potentially greater risk. DEWNR's remote & isolated work procedure states that:

For LOW risk remote/isolated work a mobile phone, radio or other local system may be used. For MEDIUM to EXTREME risk remote/isolated work a minimum of two "Operating Devices" are required to enable voice call-ins to base "Operating Devices" may be selected from a mobile phone (Appendix 2 shows coverage for the Telstra Next G mobile phone network), satellite phone or High Frequency (HF), Ultra High Frequency (UHF) or Government Radio Network (GRN) radio Employees conducting high risk remote/isolated work may also carry an emergency distress beacon (eg PLB/EPIRB) with Global Positioning System (GPS), to summon assistance.

Boats and aircraft must carry an Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). GPS trackers (e.g. SPOT) may also be used as a supplementary measure to locate a worker and determine the need for an emergency response, and must be activated during working hours and in 'Tracking' mode. Where other communications are inoperative a manually activated 'OK' message from a SPOT device will be considered a legitimate log-in call.

DEWNR Days of Heightened Fire Danger Procedure

Depending on the forecast fire danger category, DEWNR's days of heightened fire danger procedure goes further. Along with a number of other steps (e.g. written, approved plans), the procedure states: Managers must ensure that field parties have, at all times, at least one effective means of communication for the area in which they are working and employees are trained in its operation. This requires a backup method to be available where the preferred method may become unreliable e.g. mobile telephone black spots, to ensure one is always operative."

One last word!

Other important factors to consider prior to any travel include training and education, other necessary equipment (including PPE, first-aid kits, water, shovel, fire blanket, etc.) and whether your vehicle is 'fit for purpose' (including service and maintenance, checklists completed). Have a look at the relevant DEWNR procedures for more detail.

There is no reason to go overboard with planning and procedures, however both are necessary to avoid the real possibility of leaving a colleague stranded, or worse. Following DEWNR procedures is a requirement you must follow, but it is as well to remember that mutual consideration for the wellbeing of others means that you also will be on the receiving end of a helping hand should you one day find yourself in need of assistance.

REMEMBER - YOUR SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT!