

## **WHS09 Field Work Policy**

### **Policy**

The Organisation is committed to the safety of its employees whilst engaged in field work. This policy outlines the responsibilities of the Organisation and employees in relation to field work.

### **Planning, risk assessment and the management of field work**

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that adequate field work planning is carried out, including assessment of the risks that need to be managed during field work, and for ensuring that safe working procedures have been established for staff.

The Organisation is responsible for ensuring that:

- All field officers are adequately prepared.
- Suitable lines of communication with field officers are available and accidents are reported and investigated.

The person who is organising the field work is responsible for planning and risk assessment. The aim of the risk assessment is first to identify all the hazards associated with the work and then assess the risk that these hazards present. This should identify where action can be taken to reduce the risk to an acceptable level. The Field Work Hazard Identification Checklist (Appendix A) and Field Work Hazard and Consideration Identification Checklist (Appendix B) should be used to identify considerations for planning for field work.

Three types of risk should be considered when planning fieldwork:

- Universal risks, applicable to all field work (general travel-related risks).
- Generic risks, applicable to all field work of that type (property visits).
- Specific risks that apply to particular locations (reflecting the presence of local danger at a field work site, or travel-related risks applying to a particular area).

Risk assessments should also consider the knowledge, experience, and skills of the person conducting the field work, or of all participants if planning a group event.

The amount of time spent on planning and the degree of detail recorded in the risk assessment needs to be proportionate to the inherent danger present in the field. For instance, it is sensible to make simple generic assessments for routine visits to low risk areas. More extensive planning and assessment would be required for visits where there may be a higher risk to personal safety.

Field officers must be adequately trained for the activity they are undertaking, for example field officers staff must be trained in first aid.

### **Conduct of field work**

#### *Field work on foot*

The time scheduled for the field work must allow adequate time for regular breaks. The planning activities must be matched to the physical capabilities of the participants eg. Walking distances and equipment to be carried.

### **Use of transport**

Vehicles, boats and aircrafts may be needed on field trips, particularly in remote areas. Risk assessments should take into account the suitability of the chosen method of transport (2WD or 4WD) and the prevention of driver/operator fatigue. When selecting an appropriate vehicle take into account the following considerations:

- Current and recent weather;
- Type of roads to be travelled
  - Bitumen, well maintained all weather dirt roads – 2WD
  - Poor condition dirt roads and/or non-all weather roads – 4WD
- Vehicle capacity for equipment / passengers.

Drivers or pilots must comply with relevant national regulations and possess the appropriate licences. All traffic rules must be observed and seat belts used.

Employees are not permitted to utilise any form of transport, other than a motor vehicle when conducting work on behalf of the Organisation. In cases where land is water logged from heavy rain or flood and not accessible by motor vehicle, Employees will have to make another appointment to go back when access becomes available. Other forms of transport that are NOT permitted for use by Employees include, but are not limited to:

- All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) – Quad Bikes, etc
- Horses
- Helicopters
- Motor bikes

Organisation vehicles will be fitted with appropriate equipment for emergency provisions:

- Spare wheels;
- First aid kit;
- Bottled water;
- PLB or SPOT;
- Fire extinguisher.

Field officers are responsible for communication with the Organisation to ensure their vehicles are fitted with the listed emergency equipment and maintenance is scheduled and completed on time.

## **First Aid**

First aid kits should be taken in to the field with officers. All first aid kits will have a snake bite kit. At minimum field officers must take the snake bite kit with them when moving more than 5 meters from their vehicle.

When conducting group remote area field work, a currently qualified first aid attendant is required to be present. Contents of the first aid kits need to reflect the types of hazards likely to cause injury.

## **Catering**

When providing catering as part of field work, food hygiene in the field is essential.

## **Reporting hazards, incidents and injuries**

Hazards, incidents and injuries must be reported as per the *Incident Report and Investigation Procedure* in the occurrence of an injury, near miss or where a hazard may have resulted in an injury.

## **Medical conditions affecting field work participation**

All participants involved in field work must be physically and mentally fit for the tasks required in the field. Any relevant medical conditions must be disclosed to the field officers supervisor if the condition may affect their ability to participate safely in the field work activity. Information provided must be treated as confidential, unless non-disclosure creates a risk to other participants.

## **Notification of field work**

FBA employees must utilise the Loneworker service when travelling to and from field work and as per WHS05 Loneworker Policy.

## **Assessing your safety**

When conducting field work, if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with the environment you have entered FBA urges officers to remove themselves from the danger immediately. If you have an incident on field work where you are made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe you must report this to your supervisor immediately. It is important to make an assessment of your safety using the information provided in this policy and your common knowledge. Each field visit will present different risks and hazards, employees must identify hazards and conduct spot checks while in the field.

## **Identify hazards before a field visit**

If you are organising a field visit, ask the land holder if there are any safety risks that you should be aware of before entering their property. There may be hazards they are able to bring to your attention to ensure you are well informed eg a landholder may have guard dogs and you should not exit your vehicle until the landholder is at your vehicle and in control of the dogs.

## **Workshops, meetings or field days**



The Organisation is responsible for the health and safety of participants at workshops, meetings or field days organised on behalf of the organisation. Field officers planning workshops, meetings or field days need to manage the health and safety of the venue and activities. The WHS Considerations for Venues checklist (Appendix C) should be used in planning for these activities.

### **Dealing with an Aggressive Person**

As officers are dealing with the public at field events such as workshops, meetings or field days there is a higher risk of encountering aggressive people. It is important for the safety of the field officer to familiarise themselves with tips for dealing with an aggressive person (Appendix D).

## Appendix A: Field Work Hazard Identification Checklist

Utilise this checklist of hazards as a guide when completing a risk assessment for fieldwork.

Potential Hazards/Things to consider	
<b>Field work activities at site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bushwalking</li> <li>• Working at height</li> <li>• Sample collecting</li> <li>• Boating</li> <li>• Geological sampling</li> <li>• Wall collapse potential</li> <li>• Rock chips</li> </ul>	<b>Tides and Weather</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tide data</li> <li>• Meteorology bureau forecasts</li> <li>• Radio broadcasts</li> </ul>
	<b>Urban</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hostile or violent persons</li> <li>• Snakes</li> </ul>
<b>Personal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sunburn</li> <li>• Heat stress</li> <li>• Cold stress</li> <li>• Manual handling, lifting</li> <li>• Slips and trips</li> <li>• Mental stress</li> <li>• Personal security and safety</li> <li>• Allergies</li> <li>• Lack of sleep</li> </ul>	<b>Chemicals/Hazardous Substances</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carcinogens, geno toxins</li> <li>• Sensitising agents</li> <li>• Irritants</li> <li>• Toxic substances (poisons)</li> <li>• Solvents</li> <li>• MSDS available</li> </ul>
<b>Fauna &amp; Flora</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stings (terrestrial/marine animals)</li> <li>• Dangerous marine animals</li> <li>• Stock (cattle etc)</li> <li>• Snakes</li> <li>• Bats</li> <li>• Spiders, ticks, leeches etc</li> <li>• Allergens</li> <li>• Handling of small animals</li> <li>• Handling of large animals</li> <li>• Harmful plant contact (sap, stinging hairs etc)</li> </ul>	<b>Mechanical Hazards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicles</li> <li>• Machinery/moving equipment</li> <li>• Vibration</li> <li>• Pressure equipment</li> <li>• Generation of dust</li> </ul>
	<b>Fire and Explosion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flammable substances</li> <li>• Explosives</li> </ul>
	<b>Electrical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High voltage equipment</li> <li>• 240v electrical equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Camp Site</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Terrain</li> <li>• Falling tree branches</li> <li>• Flash flooding</li> <li>• Safe from wildlife/stock</li> <li>• Safe from vehicles</li> <li>• Secure from theft</li> <li>• Harassment, hostile persons</li> </ul>	<b>Thermal hazards</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hypothermia</li> <li>• Heatstroke</li> </ul>
	<b>Public/Land holders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire arm safety</li> <li>• Aggression – See Appendix D</li> </ul>
	<b>Transport</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicles</li> <li>• Boats</li> <li>• Aircraft</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Field Work Hazard and Consideration Identification Checklist

Utilise this checklist of things that must be taken into considering when planning field work.

<p><b>Field work party</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size</li> <li>• Composition</li> <li>• Novice/experienced</li> <li>• Fitness</li> <li>• Medical conditions</li> </ul>	<p><b>Personal protection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gloves</li> <li>• Goggles</li> <li>• Face masks</li> <li>• Respirator</li> <li>• Harness</li> <li>• Hard hat</li> <li>• High visibility vests</li> <li>• Sunscreen</li> <li>• Hat</li> <li>• Sunglasses</li> </ul>
<p><b>Clothing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sun hat</li> <li>• Sunsmart clothing</li> <li>• Trousers/overalls</li> <li>• Closed in footwear</li> <li>• High visibility clothing</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transport</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driver licensing</li> <li>• Driver training</li> </ul> <p><b>Navigation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Route selection</li> <li>• Location determination</li> <li>• Direction determination</li> </ul>
<p><b>Etiquette requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bush etiquette/environment</li> <li>• Collecting permits</li> <li>• Permission to enter private land</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between participants</li> <li>• With supervisor</li> <li>• Service to contact Loneworker</li> <li>• Emergency location beacon</li> </ul>
<p><b>Camp requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portable water and food</li> <li>• Cooking facilities</li> <li>• LP gas arrangements</li> <li>• Electrical power failures</li> <li>• Lighting</li> <li>• Noise</li> <li>• Privacy</li> <li>• Accommodation facilities</li> <li>• Hygiene/ablution arrangements</li> <li>• Smoking/alcohol ground rules</li> </ul>	<p><b>Fire Risks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extinguisher</li> <li>• Campfires</li> <li>• Combustibles</li> </ul> <p><b>Fire Aid Requirements</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First aider in the group</li> <li>• First aid kit in transport</li> <li>• Portable first aid kit (for walking trips away from base)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Licensing/Authorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site specific inductions</li> <li>• Flora/fauna collecting</li> <li>• National Parks permits</li> <li>• Indigenous area access permits</li> <li>• Access permits – mine sites</li> <li>• Access to private property</li> <li>• Poison permits</li> </ul>	

## Appendix C: WHS CONSIDERATIONS FOR VENUES

### Things to consider when choosing a venue for workshop or meeting

Use this form/list to identify any WHS issues at the venue. You may be able to correct, control or change some issues.

- Please place a ✓ or × in the column that is most suitable.
- If you place a ✓ or × in the *Action Required* column, you must note the issue in the *Comments* column.

	Acceptable	Action Required	Not Applicable	Comments
<b>Fire &amp; Emergency Evacuation</b>				
Are there Fire Extinguishers in place? (If not, do you have your own?)				
Is the fire fighting equipment serviced/tagged?				
Is there Emergency exit signage, or have you advised people of where to exit in an emergency?				
Are exit doors easily opened from inside?				
Are all exit pathways clear of obstruction?				
<b>Environment</b>				
Is the temperature comfortable? i.e. is there air-conditioning, or natural ventilation?				
Is lighting adequate? Is it too dark, or too bright?				
Is the area free from odours?				
Is the noise level acceptable? Will you hear the speaker clearly?				
<b>Walking Surfaces</b>				
Are floors free from obstructions and tripping hazards?				
Is carpet secure and free of tears, lumps or loose pieces?				
Are any cords stretched across aisles or under carpets?				
Are handrails in good condition?				
<b>Electrical Safety</b>				
Is there a safety switch connected to the main power supply? If not, then all electrical equipment taken on premises must be tested and tagged.				
Are power leads in good condition? No frayed or defective leads				
Are power boards being used? (not double adaptors)				
Does portable equipment (equipment taken outside FBA office) have current test tags				



	Acceptable	Action Required	Not Applicable	Comments
Are power cords located away from walkways. If this cannot be avoided cords should be secured to the floor with masking tape to prevent trip hazards.				
<b>Kitchen</b>				
Is the kitchen/amenities area kept clean?				
Is safe, cool drinking water available?				
Are kitchen appliances and whitegoods clean?				
<b>Toilets</b>				
Are toilets & showers clean?				
Are toilets well ventilated? i.e. window or exhaust fan present				
Are soap (or soap dispensers) provided?				
Are hand drying facilities available?				
Is sanitary disposal in place and serviced regularly?				
<b>Other</b>				
Is there adequate parking? Do visitors need to cross busy or main roads to get to the venue?				
Is the venue a neutral venue? Do you know if anyone is going to be a nuisance, get aggressive, or take offense to the venue? Ask other field officers, or landholders to gauge their opinion if necessary.				
Is there a reliable phone service available at the venue?				
Is there a first aid kit at the venue? If not, take your own.				



## Appendix D: Tips for dealing with an aggressive person

The natural tendency when someone begins to attack is to strike back. However, this is often not wise. People who are in the heat of an aggressive attack are rarely successfully dealt with by counterattack. Counterattack only adds fuel to the fire and rarely accomplishes anything with an angry person.

A wiser approach is to help the person to feel understood and encourage him or her to calm down and discuss the situation reasonably. A caution, however, is that it would be most unwise to admonish the person in the middle of an attack to “calm down and discuss the situation reasonably!” Instead, use the following steps.

- Always be aware of your personal safety with respect to other persons. If you are being watched or followed or feel insecure because of any activities of people nearby, leave for a safer area immediately.
  - Be aware of signs that someone is about to become aggressive such as facial expression, verbal threats and increase in breathing rate.
  - If aggressive behaviour turns threatening (the person has a weapon, has made threats against your physical safety or seems imminently dangerous) leave any gear and just go. Once you have reached a safer area, phone your supervisor.
  - If you cannot leave the area where the aggressive person is and you feel unsafe and in danger, phone triple zero (000) immediately.
1. **Hear the person out**  
Don't interrupt or try to make your point. Instead, listen attentively, using head nods or short verbal statements like “Uh-huh” or “I see” to encourage the person to continue to talk. Many people use aggression as a coping mechanism, when what they really need to do is talk their feelings out. Just lending an ear may help them calm down.
  2. **Keep asking for elaboration and clarification**  
Show that you are open to hearing and understanding what the person is saying, this will encourage the individual to calm down. You may ask questions like, “Then what happened?” or “Tell me more about what you meant when you said ...”
  3. **Show concern on your face**  
Your facial expressions should be attentive and concerned. Indicate your interest in what the person is saying by maintaining a pleasant, relaxed facial expression and make eye contact.
  4. **Use a soft, low voice tone**  
Never raise your voice above that of a person who is yelling. This will only make them to yell more loudly! Lower your voice tone below your normal range. This will encourage the person to speak more softly and calmly.
  5. **Paraphrase and summarize what the person has said**  
Show the person that you are listening and trying to understand - say something like, “Let me see if I understand what you are saying” (summarise in your own words what was said).
  6. **Do not argue**  
Do not argue with an aggressive person. If necessary, agree with them, “I can see you are upset”, and apologise for the way they're feeling (“I'm so sorry you feel you've been treated unfairly.”). This helps to calm the situation because it's nearly impossible to continue arguing with someone that's agreeing with you.

**7. Find as much as possible to agree with**

There is usually some truth to their observations, even if they have misinterpreted some part of the situation. Mention some area of the person's point of view in which you find validity, acknowledging your ability to see how it could have been interpreted in the way they see it.

**8. Empathize with the person's feelings**

You might say something like, "I can see how you would be really frustrated. In situations before where I felt that I was cut off and my opinions didn't matter, I felt frustrated, too."

**9. Ask what he or she thinks would make the situation better**

Ask the individual for suggestions for improvement and begin to move the situation toward a problem-solving mode.