



Australian Contaminated Land Consultants Association (Victoria) Inc. Travel Safety – Are You Prepared?

Background

Statistically, and intuitively, we know that travel is a high risk activity for many contaminated land industry employees. Working remotely or as a lone worker adds to the risk. Several recent incidents highlight the need to proactively plan for travel, especially with relation to fatigue, communications and emergency response.

Example incidents and near misses

Incidents occurring recently at ACLCA member companies, that have placed employees and potentially other parties at significant risk include:

- Fatality - fatigued field employee crashed vehicle after falling asleep at the wheel as a result of a long day of travel and field work.
- Field equipment falling off vehicles, or becoming loose objects in vehicles
- Trailer disconnected from vehicle while moving, causing damage to trailer
- Satellite phone not tested – didn't work
- Attack by animals unique to site, e.g. bees, wasps, emus, snakes
- Bogged vehicle at river crossing in remote location with no mobile phone coverage.

Prevention

Proactive planning

- Develop a company procedure on the following topics: remote area travel and access; international travel; safe use of motor vehicles; and fatigue management.
- Brainstorm potential hazards with a group of people familiar with the location and task.
- Complete a project health, environment and safety plan using the hierarchy of control to reduce the risk of the hazards causing damage

Fatigue management

- Proactively manage fatigue.
- Get enough sleep before driving.
- Don't start a long trip after a long day's work
- Arrange overnight stays where appropriate. Create a journey management plan, including regular rest stops
- Don't drive at times when you'd normally be asleep
- Remember that once you are fatigued, the only cure is sleep!

Remote work / lone worker management

- Treat all remote area and lone worker situations as serious undertakings.
- Develop and implement a communications and emergency response plan suitable for the nature of the trip
- Ensure all required safety equipment is present, is functional and is used (e.g. EPIRB, satellite phone, mobile phone, first aid kit etc). Consider use of a remote call-in service provider

Safe use of motor vehicles

- Select the type of vehicle most appropriate for the task
- Defensive driver training and 4WD training
- Avoid driving at dawn and dusk.
- Ensure loads are secured and no loose objects in passenger cabin. E.g. use screen barriers; ensure that fire extinguishers and gas cylinders are secured appropriately to prevent discharge or damage

Useful resources

Victorian OHS Act 2004.

Guide to safe work related driving. WorkSafe Victoria, November 2008.

www.smarttraveller.gov.au - Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade travel advice website.

Disclaimer: This alert is provided to raise awareness of an important safety issue. It does not replace the need for member companies to review and manage their specific risks.