



ASSOCIATION OF MARKET AND SOCIAL RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS

OHS GUIDELINES FOR FIELD INTERVIEWING

Forward

These OHS Guidelines for field interviewers have been developed through a consultative process between Market and Social Research Industry employers, employees and the National Union of Workers (NUW).

OHS Guidelines

These guidelines provide an explanatory document giving detailed information on the requirements of legislation and or matters relating to occupational safety and health.

Scope

These guidelines are intended to provide guidance for employers and employees in the Industry on occupational safety and health management for field interviewers across Australia. The practical guidance in this document should be considered in conjunction with the general duties in the relevant state or territory Occupational Health and Safety legislation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Market and Social Research Industry plays a critical role within Australia. It assists the private sector to gain a creative and innovative edge, as well as providing the public sector with analytical insight into its stakeholders and their interests. One important service market & social research companies provide is face-to-face interviewing. The majority of field interviewers are casuals whose networks cover cities metro, rural and remote areas.

The aim of this guideline is to help employers and employees address occupational safety and health issues related to a field worker's working environment. It recommends ways in which health and safety hazards commonly associated with the field workers' work can be addressed in accordance with the relevant OHS legislation.

2. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

OHS legislation contains general duties that describe the responsibilities of people who affect safety and health at work.

These responsibilities include:

- All people are given the highest level of health and safety protection that is reasonably practicable;
- Those who manage or control activities that give rise, or may give rise to risks to health or safety are responsible for eliminating or reducing health and safety risks, so far as reasonably practicable;
- Employers should be proactive and take reasonably practicable measures to ensure health and safety in their business activities;
- Employers and employees should exchange information about risks to health or safety and measures that can be taken to eliminate or reduce those risks and
- Employees are entitled to be represented on health and safety issues.

OHS legislation also places specific obligations on both employers and employees.

Employers must, so far as practicable:

- Provide a workplace that is safe and without risks to health;
- Provide safe plant (**equipment**) and systems of work;
- Provide adequate facilities and amenities; and
- Provide all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision for all employees;
- Engage suitable qualified persons to advise on health and safety issues;
- Ensure safe handling storage and transport of plant and substances.

Employee's responsibilities:

- To take reasonable care of their own health and safety (and that of others);
- To not wilfully put at risk the health and safety of others;
- To co-operate with his or her employer with regards to health and safety;
- To properly use all safety equipment provided by their employer.

3. SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK: WORKPLACE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Policies and procedures should be developed and implemented for each workplace to ensure safe systems of work and include:

- hazard identification and risk assessment and risk control processes;
- monitoring performance and reviewing control measures;
- mechanisms for consulting with employees;
- induction and training programs;
- an agreed system for reporting and recording information on identified hazards or other relevant safety and health information;
- safe work methods, such as job or task procedures;
- review of safety management policies and procedures;
- employee Occupational Health and Safety representation.

3.1 - AN OVERVIEW

Employers have a duty to ensure, as far as practicable, that employees are not exposed to hazards at the workplace.

There is a specific requirement for employers to carry out a risk management process. It involves a three-step process to:

- identify hazards;
- assess risks; and
- control risks.

To assist in carrying out the risk management process, consideration should be given to:

- previous injuries, 'near miss' incidents or accidents which have occurred at the workplace or other similar workplaces;
- consultation with employees, safety and health representatives (if any) and safety and health committees to find out any problems associated with performing tasks or jobs;
- encouraging employees to report work-related injury or illness symptoms;
- records or statistics that could indicate potentially unsafe work practices.

3.2 - IDENTIFYING HAZARDS

The first step in the risk management process is identifying hazards. This involves recognising items, situations or activities that may cause injury or harm to the health of people.

There are a number of ways to identify items or potential situations that may cause an injury or harm. Choosing an appropriate process or procedure for identifying hazards will depend on the nature of the work environment and hazards involved.

Hazard identification processes or procedures may include:

- developing a hazard checklist;
- examining records of past incidents and injuries at the workplace;
- examining data for similar workplaces;
- carrying out inspections of the workplace (consider using checklists);
- encouraging employees to report work-related symptoms;
- consulting employees and HSRs and committees (where applicable); and
- talking to industry associations and other similar businesses.

Table 1. Common hazards for field workers -

The most common and important OHS issues for field workers include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate car maintenance and security-<i>increasing the risk of injury</i>; Inadequate physical working environment including excessive heat or cold conditions-<i>increasing the risk of injury or harm</i>;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate physical working environment including excessive heat or cold conditions-<i>increasing the risk of injury or harm</i>;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal health including excessive hot and cold conditions - <i>increasing the risk of injury or harm in extreme weather conditions</i>;
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal security including hours of work- <i>increasing the chances of being harmed</i>.

3.3 - CONTROLLING RISKS

The third step is to implement control measures to eliminate or reduce the risk of people being injured or harmed and ensure the measures are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

There is a preferred order of control measures ranging from the most effective to the least effective in eliminating or reducing the risks of injury or harm. This is outlined in the following table.

Table 2. Preferred order of control measures to eliminate or reduce the risk of injury or harm

<p>1. Elimination — removing the hazard or hazardous work practice from the workplace.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - modifying work organisation with task analysis and job redesign; - modifying work shifts; <i>ensuring that you do not cold call a house after dusk</i>
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- replacing faulty equipment.
2. Substitution — substituting or replacing a hazard or hazardous work practice with a less hazardous one.
3. Isolation — isolating or separating the hazard or hazardous work practice from people involved in the work or people in the general work area.
4. Engineering controls — if the hazard cannot be eliminated, substituted or isolated, an engineering control is the next preferred measure. For example: - repairing and maintaining equipment; <i>ensuring your vehicle is well maintained.</i>
5. Administrative controls — this includes introducing work practices that reduce the risk, such as implementing measures to ensure procedures, instruction and training are provided, for example: - implementing acoustic incident reporting and action plans; - implementing or improving customer contact and dispute resolution procedures; and - implementing job rotation; <i>ensuring you have one day off work each week.</i>
In some instances, a combination of control measures may be appropriate

3.4 EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATION

All employees have the right to be represented by an elected Occupational Health and Safety Representative (HSR).

It is important to know the name and contact details of your OHS Representative, if one has been elected for your workplace.

Alternatively, if you do not have an elected OHS Representative employees have the right to negotiate with their employer over the number of Designated Work Groups (DWG) and how many HSRs should look after each DWG. A DWG refers to a grouping of employees who have formed to enable their interests to be best represented and safeguarded.

If you have any queries about your rights in regard OHS representation contact your employer, or the NUW.

4. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Employers must provide proper safety and health instruction and training to employees. Instruction and training are an important part of ensuring safe systems of work and should take into account the functions of each employee

and provide them with the necessary skills and knowledge to enable them to do their work safely.

The type of instruction and training given should include:

- general safety and health induction, including the 'duty of care' responsibilities under the Act and Regulations and workplace policies and procedures;
- task specific induction;
- 'on the job' training;
- 'in house' training programs designed to address specific needs (such as specific training for UV protection); and
- Industry-based or formal training (such as accredited or certificated courses).

5. CAR MAINTENANCE AND SECURITY

Whilst in the field an interviewer's car is their office so it is important to ensure the car is safe. Good car maintenance and security are important.

5.1 CONTROL MEASURES

- This means having regular services and safety inspections.
- When parking your car ensure it is in a safe place.
- In summer it may be necessary to ensure it is parked in the shade.
- Be aware that the heat build up in a car parked in summer can affect health.
- Start the car and wind the windows down to let the hot air out prior to driving.
- This advice is also applicable when you have air conditioning.
- Try not to park the car in an isolated area and be aware of your surroundings when returning to your car.
- When working in the evening ensure the car is parked in a visible location like under a street light.

- Country Interviewers should be aware of driver fatigue when travelling long distances. When doing long distance travel, employees should consider submitting a travel plan.
- Call into your employer regularly (for example, every 4 hours).
- Your mobile phone should have preset emergency numbers.
- Employees should carry a torch when conducting night interviews.
- You are encouraged to take a 5 to 10 minute break for every hour of uninterrupted driving.
- Be aware of the driving conditions and try to avoid routes where black ice has been found on the road
- In snow ensure you have the proper equipment such as chains to ensure your driving safety.
- If involved in a vehicle accident whilst working ensure that you report it to the local police so as not to jeopardize any work claims for injuries sustained.

6. EXTREME HOT CONDITIONS

Working in extreme hot and humid conditions may cause heat illness. Heat illness covers a range of medical conditions that can arise including heat stroke, fainting in heat, heat exhaustion, heat cramps and skin rashes. Signs and symptoms of heat illness include nausea, dizziness, clumsiness, collapse and convulsions.

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation called UV and radiant heat must be considered for the following reasons:

- A surface temperature of 31 degrees may cause a radiant temperature of 38 to 39 degrees when humidity levels and wind factors are taken into account.
- The older an interviewer is the harder it is for his/her body to recognize how heat is affecting them.
- Medication may affect the way an interviewer's body handles the heat.

6.1 CONTROL MEASURES

- Try to avoid working during the hottest part of the day and if that means you cannot put in a full shift (6.5 hours) contact your supervisor.
- Avoid excessive caffeine as this may cause dehydration.
- Drink plenty of cool water.
- Wear clothing that is lightweight, loose fitting and with a collar and a sleeve length of at least to elbow
- Hats provide shade and the bigger the brim the greater the amount of shade that is provided.
- Wear high UV protection sunglasses to protect your eyes.
- An employer should provide the protective equipment necessary to mitigate against the risks caused by extreme hot conditions.
- If at any time an interviewer feels unwell, they should find a cool shady place to sit and rest, and not drive until they feel well enough.
- An interviewer should contact their supervisor or HSR if they cannot continue.
- Work schedules should be planned in advance taking into account weather forecasts.

7. EXTREME COLD CONDITIONS

Extreme cold conditions can have a detrimental effect on an interviewer's wellbeing. There is a risk of hypothermia in temperatures ranging from 0 to 10 degrees. Furthermore, quite often the apparent temperature which takes into account wind speed and chill factors is quite a lot lower than the recorded temperature. For example if the recorded temperature is 8 degrees and the wind speed on a cloudy day is 44 kilometers per hours the wind chill temperature is actually -2 degrees. As with heat, age and medical conditions may affect how an interviewer reacts to the cold.

7.1 Control Measures

- To protect yourself from the cold wear several layers of clothing rather than one bulky layer. Wool is the ideal material for clothes in cold conditions.

- Make sure your clothes and footwear are not too tight as they may restrict circulation and increase the chances of hypothermia.
- Wearing gloves and scarves is also advised.
- Use weatherproof outer layers if possible. A warm hat is also advisable to keep heat from dissipating through the scalp.
- Ensure your feet do not get wet in any circumstances as this will affect your well being during the day.
- Avoid ice and puddles whilst walking. If removing your footwear when entering a respondent's house ensure they are placed in a dry area.
- Keep dry and if that means heading for your vehicle to avoid a downpour before it occurs, do so.
- If pre-warned about the weather a spare set of clothing and pair of shoes and socks in your vehicle is also advisable.
- Depending on the conditions regular breaks to prevent fatigue may be advisable.
- Fatigue is a major problem in extremely cold conditions and can result in an interviewer being less alert and prone to accidents.
- If the conditions make it difficult to continue, contact your supervisor or HSR.
- Work schedules should be planned in advance taking into account the weather forecast.

8. PERSONAL HEALTH

An employer has the duty to provide employees, so far as is reasonably practicable, a working environment that is without risks to health. However, as an employee you should take reasonable care for your own health. Be aware of any pre-existing health issues you may have, how your working conditions may possibly aggravate them, and consult your employer and HSR about this.

It is also important to note that field interviewers should not be placed in a situation where they may pass on a contagious illness to a member of the public.

8.1 Control Measures

- If you are taking medication you should be aware of the side effects. For example some medication reduces your tolerance to hot weather while others may affect you during very cold weather.
- Be aware of any chronic illness your respondent has and how a field interviewer may affect them.
- If a respondent is showing signs of an illness have an understanding as to how that may affect you.
- When planning work schedules try to ensure one complete day per week where you do not work at all.

The most important thing to remember is to be aware of your surroundings and be aware of your limitations due to your age and health. If you have any concerns in relation to Occupational Health and Safety discuss it with your supervisor or HSR. You will find they are sympathetic to any concerns you may have.

Report any incident to your supervisor immediately so that an investigation can be conducted and remedies put in place immediately.

Any costs associated with ensuring your working environment is safe and healthy such as extreme weather clothing, sunglasses etc. should be reimbursed. Contact your supervisor or HSR for advice on this matter.

9. PERSONAL SECURITY

It is of utmost importance that you are aware of your surroundings and how this may affect your personal security.

9.1 Control Measures

- Be alert to the conditions of the pavement and overhanging branches. It is very easy to be focusing on your call sheets whilst walking and not be alert to potential hazards.
- If you are working in an area in which you feel unsafe contact your supervisor.
- Do not cold call dwellings after dusk as this increases your chances of being harmed.
- Do not approach any dwelling which you are not comfortable with.
- If there is an evening appointment try to view the location during the day to be aware of surroundings. This is regarded as legitimate paid work.
- If you are not comfortable with a respondent, simply tell them that they do not fit the age/gender for this particular survey and leave the dwellings.
- Pre-call clients to confirm evening appointments

- When inside dwellings try to give yourself the closest location to the door if you do not feel comfortable after entering the home.
- Interviewers are encouraged to be provided with a personal alarm for their security.
- Be alert to any dogs.

10. REPORTING WORKPLACE INJURIES

Sometimes it is not possible to prevent all injuries. In the event that you suffer a workplace injury it is important that you report that injury to your supervisor and your HSR as soon as reasonably possible.

Remember that where a workplace injury has caused you to incur medical expenses and/or take time off work a Work Cover claim (with a Work Cover doctor's certificate) should be lodged.

If you are injured please contact your employer for a Work Cover claim form.

If your employer refuses to accept a Work Cover claim form, contact your HSR, or the NUW office for assistance.