

Potential OHS Issues Relating to Industrial Action

This document includes practical guidance for work or study out of normal working hours when internal emergency response is reduced. These situations can be compared to the levels of emergency response during a day of industrial action. Reference should be made to the Monash University OH&S [After Hours Procedure](#).

The following generic risk assessment information is provided as guidance for supervisors, managers, lecturers and demonstrators to identify the health and safety aspects that maybe associated with industrial action. It also provides examples of appropriate controls to ensure the safety of employees and students who attend on such days.

This information is intended as a guide only and may not be applicable for all situations. Advice on specific OHS areas of concern resulting from industrial action can be sought from your Manager, Safety Officer or Faculty/Area OHS Consultant / Advisor.

In determining the potential OHS issues related to industrial action a risk management approach should be undertaken including identifying potential risks and determining appropriate controls to manage the risks.

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION

Industrial action at the University may result in safety hazards or concerns, some of which are listed below.

- Low supervisory levels for staff and students.
- Low staff levels resulting in staff working alone for extended periods of time.
- Reduced levels of internal emergency response. i.e. reduced number of first aiders, maintenance personnel, safety officers (Radiation, Biosafety, Departmental/Faculty).
- Disruption of other essential services, delivery of supplies, etc.
- Disruption of access & egress at entries to the University. e.g. picket lines that may lead to aggravated behaviour from members of the public or other industries surrounding the university due to traffic flow problems.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Typical assessment questions to be considered when assessing the risks associated with these hazards include:

- Who will be attending on the day? (this should include the number of employees who will be in each work area and the availability of first aiders, Biosafety Officer, Radiation Safety Officer, supervisors and managers, building/floor wardens)
- What tasks are to be performed by staff attending work on the day?
- Will the tasks to be performed involve the use of chemicals or hazardous materials, radioactive substances, biohazards, machinery or equipment, working at heights or other hazardous work activities?
- Will scheduled laboratory classes or field activities have adequate supervision from academic and/or technical staff?
- Will staff levels result in employees working:
 - alone for extended periods?
 - without supervision?
- What is the level of experience of the employees who will be attending work, in relation to the tasks to be performed?
- What is the normal level of supervision required for the employees to undertake the tasks to be performed?

- In the event of an incident or accident occurring, what are the normal emergency procedures? How will the normal emergency procedures be compromised by low staffing levels, low levels of internal emergency personnel, or low levels of supervision?

The above generic risk assessment questions should provide a gauge of the increased level of risk resulting from industrial action impacting staffing levels.

CONTROL OF IDENTIFIED RISKS

The hazard controls outlined below provide basic guidance on appropriate actions to ensure the safety of employees and students attending work or study on a day of industrial action.

- Ask a supervisor or manager who is attending work to overview the activities of any non-supervised staff as required.
- Investigate the capability to consolidate the laboratory/workshop activities into a limited number of laboratories or areas to eliminate the need for staff to work alone.
- Arrange for adequate supervision of student classes or activities.
- Restrict the activities for the day to less hazardous tasks. e.g. computer work, paper work, library research etc.
- Determine and publicise alternative emergency procedures for the day.

Note:

Closure of the facilities or cancellation of classes should be considered for tasks or activities that are assessed as representing an unacceptable level of risk and where appropriate alternative duties or arrangements cannot be found. The head of administrative/ academic unit responsible for the area must be consulted regarding the closure of the facilities or cancellation of classes.

In the event that the head of administrative/academic unit determines that the facilities should be closed for occupational health and safety reasons, staff wishing to undertake work should be found alternative suitable accommodation to undertake gainful employment tasks on the day of the strike. In the event that the head of administrative/academic unit determines that there is no alternative accommodation or alternative gainful employment tasks, then the staff members may be sent home for the remainder of the business day. However, staff must report to the workplace on the day of the strike and have their names recorded as being on duty.

Reference should also be made to Monash University's [Health & Safety Issue Resolution Procedure](#).