



## Occupational Health and Safety Section

# GUIDELINES for Home Visits

This guide aims to assist University staff to manage occupational health and safety when required to visit homes on official activities on behalf of the University.

A risk assessment processes should be undertaken in consultation with other staff members and other informed persons prior to a home visiting programs commencing to get a balanced analysis of the risks and possible measures, which are to be taken to eliminate or control risks.

In an effort to minimize risks to staff areas or project managers should develop clear and precise protocols for the management of home visits. These protocols should specifically address the following issues: Staff recruitment, orientation and ongoing education; communication; assessment of the environment where a home visit will occur; guidelines for home visits; travelling in cars; isolation; incident management.

### 1. PLANNING STAGE:

Is a home visit a requisite or could participants come to the University or a neutral venue rather than receive a home visit?

Prior to scheduling the Home Visit,

Gather information on the home.

- Is there adequate on-street parking?
- Where the entry door is located (front, side, back)?
- How many people will be on the premises during the home visit? Who are they and what relation are they to the participant?
- Do they own any pets? If so will they pose a risk? e.g. vicious dogs, overfriendly large dogs). If they pose a risk can they be restrained or kept separate during the interview?

*The participant should be advised that you will ring them closer to the visit date to check they are still available for the home visit and check details.*

Transport:

Will the participant be using a University vehicle? If so University procedures will apply: refer to 4.2.2 <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hr/ohs/ohs-manual/vehicle-safety.pdf>.

If a privately owned vehicle is to be used: 4.2.3 should be reviewed. The vehicle must be registered, fully insured, routinely serviced and roadworthy and a roadside assistance program is in place for the vehicle. *Please note you may not be covered by the University for repairs if you have an accident.*

Photo Identity.

Should be supplied and carried at all times.

Communication:

Students or staff participating in home visits must have a mobile phone with them on all visits. It is preferable to have use of a departmental mobile phone and have emergency and or program contact numbers programmed into the phone. Check that there is phone coverage and the home visit is not a phone black spot. If this is so two people should carry out the home visit. If a staff member is using their own phone it is recommended that they do not make personal calls or SMS during the home visit.

## Personal Safety

- If possible work in pairs
- No home visits are to be undertaken if the participant has a history of aggressive behaviour, violence, or sexual harassment, or if you believe you will be at risk.
- It may be necessary to carry a duress alarm.
- All participants who are minors should have an adult representative such as a parent during the visit.
- Where a visit is to a participant of the opposite gender it is recommended that the home visit staff member be of the same gender or the visit be conducted in pairs.

### Participant induction and safety instructions.

All participants must undertake an induction or be given documented procedures noting their understanding of processes prior to undertaking home visits.

## 2. THE HOME VISIT:

Ensure that there is a staff contact available during the visit and that they will be available for the time you are on the road/home visit, be able to log in your calls and be ready to act, if you call in with a problem. Code words may be used to identify a hazardous situation

Each participant/researcher is to plan an itinerary of their day's visits, ensure that their phone is working and fully charged.

Be familiar with the vehicle you will be driving and have any street maps or directories with you.

Have your mobile phone switched on at all times and adhere to call-in schedules. If you have a delay contact your "contact" person.

On site safety: Park in the street or where you can not be obstructed from leaving. Check for slip trip hazards, and that pets have been restrained. Introduce yourself and show your ID. Check that they still consent to the home visit before entering. Familiarise yourself with the surroundings. Chose a seat where your back is not to the door, keep your personal documents, phone, wallet, keys with you at all times. Try to keep to appointment times Do not linger at the premises longer than you need to.

## 3. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

**Lost:** Ring your contact to let them know what's happened, if it is going to affect your home visit schedule.

**Breakdown:** Pull off to the side of the road if possible, Contact roadside assist and your contact person. Stay with the car (with doors locked, if it is in an unsafe area or you are worried

**Car Accident:** Ensure you get the details of any other drivers involved (name, address, licence number, make and model of car, colour registration, insurance company and policy number). Contact your supervisor or contact person. If you sustain an injury contact your supervisor, seek medical help and complete an LTU Incident Report Form.  
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/hr/forms/incident-report.pdf>

**Medical emergency:** Whilst at a home visit, call 000. Ring your contact person

**Violent /Threatening behaviour:** If on a home visit you feel threatened, monitor signs of impending violence, such as facial expressions, verbal threats and increase in breath rate, summon help if needed, try to appear calm, speak slowly, clearly and softly and use simple language. Do not attempt to contradict the person if they are angry, Do not move closer, avoid body language such as crossed arms, hands on hips or shaking fingers, avoid direct eye contact,. If you can withdraw, step back slowly and retreat, if you can not withdraw you are entitled to use reasonable force to protect yourself.

**Loss of contact:** If the staff/student conducting the home visit fails to ring their contact at the scheduled time, the contact should. Ring the mobile (they may have forgotten to ring in, be in a black spot, or have a flat battery). Ring the last participant to ensure that they have left.  
Ring the next participant to see if they have arrived (get the participant to ring if/when they arrive. Ring the next participant as they may have missed an appointment. Ring their home to see if they have made contact. Notify the supervisor of the situation. Ring the police station closest to the area where they last rang in.