



Working outdoors

When you work outdoors as part of your public sector role, there are certain aspects of your job that require specific attention.

Introduction

Some public sector organisations employ workers whose role is mostly outdoors. These include local government employees working in parks, reserves, gardens and waste facilities. There are also state service employees engaged in activities at inland fisheries and marine environments, or on roads and construction sites.

If you are working outdoors, you may have access to machinery, equipment and other resources specific to your role. You may also be required to travel long distances and stay away from home occasionally.

It is important that you understand the responsibilities and obligations of your role, comply with applicable policies and codes of conduct, and follow relevant processes and procedures.

What public resources are used when working outdoors?

Public resources are those items or services that are paid for, owned or controlled by public sector organisations. They include:

- ▼ vehicles, mobile equipment and fuel cards
- ▼ credit cards
- ▼ tools, machinery and equipment, and
- ▼ supplies, such as building and landscaping materials.

Your job may also include indoor activities that use:

- ▼ stationery and other office supplies, office equipment, furniture and fittings, and
- ▼ telecommunication devices, such as mobile phones and tablets.

Using public resources appropriately

In addition to safety requirements, your organisation will have in place rules and procedures covering the use and management of vehicles, equipment, tools and machinery. It is important that you follow them carefully.

Operating equipment

- ▼ Only use equipment, vehicles, machinery and tools for the purpose they are designed for.
- ▼ Operate all equipment in accordance with manufacturers' specifications and your organisation's procedures.
- ▼ Fill out log books accurately.
- ▼ Identify problems and report any faulty equipment to the appropriate person.

Monitoring and maintaining equipment

- ▼ Inspect equipment regularly and arrange for any maintenance and repairs to be carried out as soon as possible.
- ▼ Follow tagging procedures to ensure faulty equipment is not available for use.

Work vehicles and fuel cards

A work vehicle may be made available to you for use while doing your job – it must not be used for personal errands or taken home without permission. Ensure you follow your organisation's procedures, which may include noting the odometer reading when refuelling the vehicle.

Fuel cards must only be used to purchase fuel for the accompanying work vehicle or piece of equipment.

Misuse of public resources

Common examples of misuse of outdoor resources are:

- ▼ using work equipment for jobs other than the project you are working on
- ▼ taking tools and equipment home for personal use without authorisation
- ▼ using work vehicles and fuel cards for non-work purposes without authority
- ▼ purchasing goods or services for private use on an organisation's credit card, and
- ▼ taking or dispersing surplus or obsolete assets, such as road base, mulch and office chairs.

Theft and fraud

Using equipment and tools outside the work environment can lead to damage and undue wear, and they are generally less secure off-site.

Borrowing equipment or tools, even if you genuinely intend to return them to work after you have finished using them, can be considered theft if you have not received permission to use them.

Fraud includes using the work fuel card for refuelling your own vehicle, or purchasing items for personal use on the work credit card. Deliberately over-ordering of resources with the intention of misusing the surplus is also fraudulent.

Theft and fraud are considered serious misconduct offences and may lead to disciplinary action, dismissal and criminal proceedings.



CASE STUDY

Taking the work car for personal use

In 2013 an employee of a Tasmanian State Government Department was alleged to have breached the State Service Code of Conduct, with seventeen specific allegations including misuse of a work vehicle.

It was alleged that the employee had, on one or more occasions, used a Government-plated vehicle for personal use after normal business hours and without authorisation, contrary to the Department's Motor Vehicle Policy.

It was also alleged that they had failed to accurately record personal travel and maintain the vehicle log book for that vehicle.

In addition, the employee failed to report a motor vehicle accident they had while using a work vehicle. The accident caused damage to private property, and this was not reported to either the organisation or the property owner.

The employee then used the damaged government vehicle after normal business hours for personal use.

The employee was subsequently suspended on full pay and an investigation found that all but one of the allegations were sustained. They were subsequently dismissed from their position.

Extract from 2014 Tasmanian Industrial Commission [Decision](#)¹

What to do if you are not sure or if you suspect misuse is taking place

Your organisation will have in place policies and procedures to guide you in making good decisions about using public resources and to report any suspected misuse. Speak to your supervisor or HR manager if you are not sure of what to do.

¹ https://www.tic.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/rtf_file/0018/280251/T14145.rtf



The Commission can help

We are available to provide support and assistance with identifying, reporting, investigating, managing and preventing misconduct: prevention@integrity.tas.gov.au or 1300 720 289.

For more Misconduct Prevention resources go to www.integrity.tas.gov.au/resources