

# CASE STUDY: VICFORESTS

NETSTAR REMOTE/LONE  
WORKER SOLUTION



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# VICFORESTS SAYS SAFETY FIRST WHEN IT COMES TO REMOTE WORKERS

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**VICFORESTS HAVE UTILISED NETSTAR'S REMOTE/LONE WORKER SOLUTION IN THEIR FLEET OF VEHICLES; A MOVE MANAGEMENT SAYS IS A "SMALL INVESTMENT" TO SAFEGUARD THEIR MOBILE WORKFORCE.**

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VicForests invested in the safety of their remote workforce by installing the latest in online GPS tracking technology in their fleet of 73 vehicles.

The organisation chose Netstar's GPS tracking system, which utilises both the mobile phone network and the Iridium satellite network to ensure coverage is provided in the most remote locations.

According to VicForests' Director of Operations, Brad Winthrop, the organisation's decision to install the Netstar solution was motivated by the satisfaction of knowing that all their employees would be arriving home safely at the end of the day.

"We have four core values that underpin everything we do, and one of the most important values is safety. We strive for zero harm," he explains.

“Our forestry staff work in remote locations overseeing and implementing a range of forestry related activities from planning, pre harvest assessments, road building, contractor harvest and haulage management and the regeneration of the harvested site. They are out there in the forest often driving alone.

“With our new online GPS system, we always know exactly where they are. If something goes wrong, the system will send an immediate notification back to base via sms or email.

“Not only does the Netstar solution allow us to pinpoint the exact location of the vehicle that’s sent the alert, but also shows us where the nearest vehicles are, so we can send someone to go and help out immediately.”

**VicForests is a Victorian state-owned business responsible for the sustainable harvest, regeneration and commercial sale of timber from Victoria’s public forests.**

**The organisation plays an important role in meeting the community demand for wood products by reducing the amount of hardwood required to be imported from overseas.**

**It harvests approximately 5000 hectares of native forest in Victoria each year - less than 0.1% of the 7.8 million hectares of native forest across the state – supplying quality timber for furniture, flooring, building materials and paper.**

**Trees are regrown across all harvested areas to ensure forests re-establish and will be able to be enjoyed by future generations.**



“IF ONE OF OUR TEAM IS AWAY FROM THEIR VEHICLE DOING AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT AND SOMETHING HAPPENS, THEY CAN JUST PUSH THE BUTTON ON THEIR KEY RING TO TRIGGER AN ALERT.”

# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WHEN IT MATTERS

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Knowing that a worker will be always able to call for assistance from their vehicle in the event of an emergency is one thing, but what happens when the worker is performing their duties away from the vehicle?

According to Mr Winthrop, it's a common enough scenario. All VicForests remote workers have been issued with a personal SOS device that they carry whenever they leave their vehicle.

Unlike handheld trackers which may not work if the satellites are not aligned, Netstar's Hybrid GPS devices work every time, guaranteed. Remote pendants are designed to send a signal to the GPS tracking device in the vehicle, which in turn creates an email or SMS alert back to base.

“An email will instantly be sent to the worker's direct superior advising that he or she has had an issue,” he clarifies. “The supervisor can then go on to the system straightaway and know exactly where their staff member is.”

# HARNESSING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

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Before switching to a GPS tracking system, VicForests had a manual system in place – one that relied on the remote workers updating the notice board with their intended whereabouts before heading out into the field.

“Sometimes people would forget to update the board, or they’d make an error,” Mr Winthrop recalls. “But with GPS tracking, we know where every vehicle is at any given time. If there’s an issue we know we can actually find the person which gives us all more peace of mind.”

Netstar’s online GPS tracking solutions are fully customisable, but for VicForests there was no need to request extensive alterations or enhancements.

“There was very little customisation, if any,” he says. “Basically, the way the system works is that you can ask Netstar for whatever reports you think you’ll need. Then, once you’ve had it running for a while, you can say we’d like to have this sort of information now and they’ll make sure they can generate those reports for you. It’s pretty straightforward to be honest.”

# MEASURABLE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

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Netstar's online GPS tracking solutions reduce both the risk and costs associated with managing a mobile workforce.

That's because in addition to providing one of the most technologically-advanced communication systems on the market today, they provide a complete vehicle management system, including reports designed to reduce costs and improve productivity.

It's a win/win situation according to Mr Winthrop.

"As well as the safety aspect, there are a lot of productivity gains to be had," he confirms. "The reports help us make sure our vehicles are serviced on time and highlight drivers who might be hard on vehicles."

# HEIGHTENED DUTY OF CARE

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By using Netstar's online GPS tracking system, VicForests are also meeting their obligations as an employer under the National Model Work Health and Safety Legislation, legislation that's designed, in part, to safeguard remote and lone workers.

Employers are now required to ensure that they provide all workers who carry out remote or isolated work with tools that guarantee effective communication and the ability to call for rescue or medical assistance in the case of an accident or emergency.

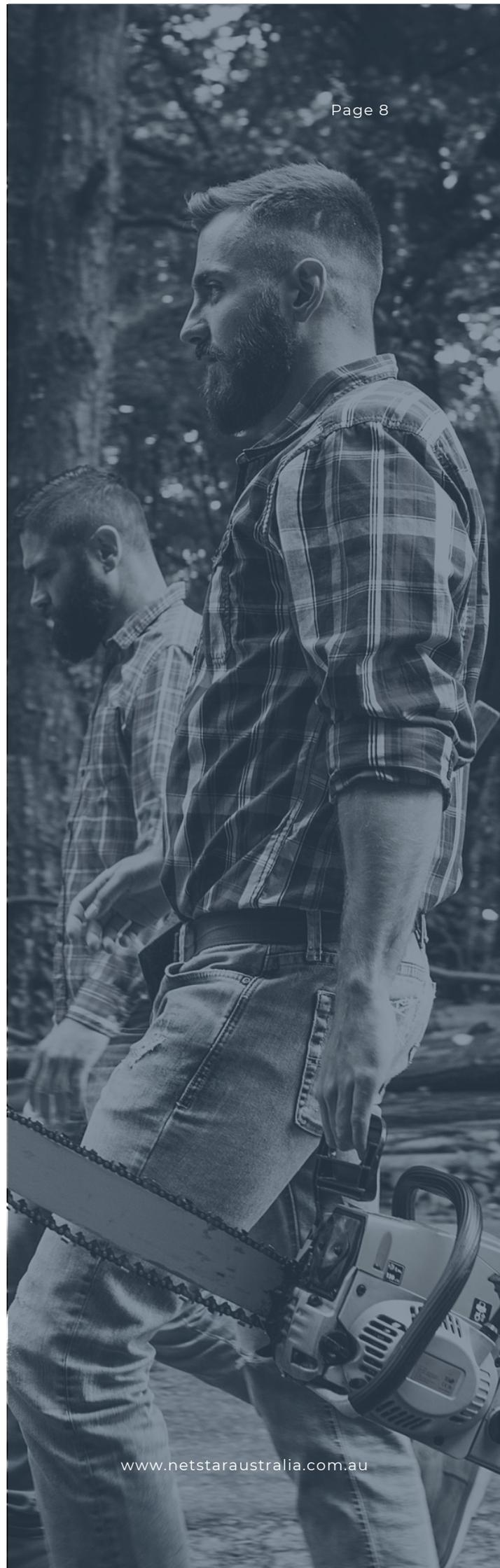
It's serious business, but an organisation's desire to protect their workforce is driven less by the fear of incurring liability when something goes wrong, and more by the satisfaction of knowing that their employees have arrived home safely.

Mr Winthrop agrees.

"At the end of the day, we want everyone to go home to their families. Netstar's GPS tracking is a small investment, to be honest, to be able to know where everybody is and to be able to help them if something happens."

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