WORKING ALONE STANDARD

Contents

1.0 Purpose

This standard is used to assess the risk of working alone when it involves the use of or exposure to hazardous materials, equipment, or environments; and/or poses the risk of injury or illness due to violence.

2.0 Scope

It applies to all faculty, employees, students and visitors performing work or participating in University activities on or off campus, including field research activities under the direction of an authorized member of the University community. Working alone is defined in the definitions section of the document.

3.0 Definitions

Check-in procedures

Check-in procedures are the periodic act of confirming that an individual is safe and has not been injured while working alone. The frequency of checking in should be based upon the nature of work, the existing hazards and working conditions.

Acceptable means of "checking in" with a worker include one or more of the following:

1.) Worker is required to phone or text a designated contact person at an agreed upon time interval. If the contact person does not receive contact within the timeframe, they shall initiate the response plan.

2.) An app prompts a worker to periodically press a button at an agreed upon time interval. If the button is not pressed, the designated contact person is notified that the worker did not check-in as scheduled. This will initiate a response plan.

The contact person shall phone or text the worker at a designated interval. If the worker does not respond, the contact person shall initiate a response plan.

Working alone

Working by oneself such that assistance is not readily available should an injury, illness or emergency arise. Alone is interpreted as being out of visual or verbal contact when contact cannot be expected from another person for more than an hour. It includes working in physical isolation, e.g. as the sole occupant of a laboratory or at a field work site, where no other person is in the vicinity (i.e. within limited range or earshot). It can occur during weekday working hours as well as in the evening, overnight or during weekends.

Working Alone Plan

A Working Alone Plan is a document that summarizes the hazards within an area and assigns a risk rating to each. Ratings shall be high, medium, or low, and required actions are based upon risk. Working alone plans must also prescribe actions for the case of when a worker/student misses their scheduled check-in.

Open the Working Alone Plan template for more information**.**

4.0 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Supervisors /Managers

- Wherever possible, managers and supervisors shall take measures to eliminate working alone.
- Shall develop a Working Alone Plan prior to permitting or assigning work that involves a worker to be working alone.
- Working Alone Plans are recommended to be developed using the Working Alone Plan template (fillable pdf).
- The Working Alone Plan shall be communicated to those employees/students who may work alone.

4.2 Employees/Students

- Employees and students shall obtain approval prior to working alone.

5.0 Development of Working Alone Plans

Working Alone Plans are developed by considering the following criteria:

- Tasks and hazards involved in the work
- Consequences resulting from a worst-case scenario
- The possibility of an incident or injury that would prevent an individual from calling for help
- The individual's training and experience level
- The time the work is to be conducted
- Access to emergency assistance

Note*: New workers (< 6 months) are particularly vulnerable to injury or harm. To mitigate this, it is important for all Supervisors to consider this factor when they are assessing the need for working alone plans and check-in procedures. New workers need more active supervision and more frequent check-ins, and so where required, this should be implemented.*

The University's Working Alone Plan template is the recommended method of developing a Working Alone Plan.

Table 1 below should be used as a guide when completing the Working Alone Plan.

Level of Risk	Requirement	Examples
High	Working alone prohibited	▪ Confined space entry ▪ Electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts ▪ Trenches ▪ Portable ladder that exceeds 6 meters in length and is not securely fastened, or work with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic ▪ Use of fall arrest equipment (without travel restraint) or scaffolds ▪ Machines and power tools that may cause critical injury (e.g., lathe, table saw, chain saw) ▪ Work with acutely toxic material (e.g. cyanides, fumigants, hydrofluoric acid) as described in the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) ▪ Work with water reactive (phosphorus chlorides, aluminum halides, sodium hydride e.g.) and pyrophoric materials (e.g., organolithium compounds, diethyl zinc, metal carbonyls, metal hydrides) as described in the SDS ▪ Use of supplied air or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) ▪ Risk of drowning ▪ Use of a vehicle, boom or similar equipment near live power lines where it is possible for any part of the equipment or its load to make contact with the live power line ▪ Open flame associated with flammable solvents ▪ Hot work where a fire watch is required ▪ Other tasks which based on hazard analysis is deemed to require more than one person for safety reasons ▪ Work with high power lasers (> 1 kW)
Moderate	Each area must develop a Standard Operating Procedure for working alone that shall include: ▪ Training for all individuals approved to work alone ▪ Clear delineation of permitted and prohibited activities or equipment	▪ Large volumes of chemicals ▪ Work with open-beam x-rays ▪ Aligning open beam class 3B or 4 lasers ▪ Radioactive materials (above exempt quantities) ▪ Exposed, energized electrical systems ▪ Work in Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs

	▪ Security processes to manage theft, property damage or injury due to unauthorized intruders Check-in procedures are mandatory for this level of risk.	▪ Work with materials having the following WHMIS physical hazards: ○ Corrosive and flammable substances ○ Organic Peroxides ▪ Work with materials having the following WHMIS health hazards: ○ Skin corrosion ○ Carcinogens, mutagens, and reproductive toxins ▪ Work with pneumatically or hydraulically powered mechanical presses ▪ Work with human subjects ▪ Extreme temperature environments ▪ Handling of cash ▪ Dealing directly with the public ▪ Work in isolated areas (field work) ▪ Work with pressure vessels/reactions or high-pressure system ▪ Work with radioactive open sources and radioactive logging sources (neutron probes) ▪ **All work being performed by new graduate or undergraduate students (< 6 months), with the exception of routine office work**
Low	May work alone Precautions needed: ▪ Supervisors must be aware that work alone is occurring ▪ Individuals must be fully trained and competent on the work, including emergency response procedures.	▪ General custodial work ▪ Building maintenance with low risk ▪ Laboratory work with minimal risk – Examples include work with analytical equipment, cleaning glassware, monitoring equipment or processes, recording data. ▪ Laboratory work with non-pathogenic materials (plants, soils, dirt, sand, etc.) ▪ Laboratory work with radioactive sealed sources, cabinet/enclosed x-rays, or enclosed lasers (does not include alignment) ▪ Routine office work

6.0 Record of Revisions

Date	Author/Editor	Change	Version
May 2025	Dhananjai Borwankar	▪ Added work with High Power Lasers (> 1 kW) in high-risk class ▪ Replaced "X-rays" in the moderate risk class with "Work with open-beam x-rays" ▪ Replaced "Work with Class 3B and 4 lasers" in the moderate risk class with "Aligning Class 3B and 4 lasers"	Working Alone Standard v.2.0 MAY2025
October 2024	Dhananjai Borwankar	▪ Changed format from a program to standard ▪ Removed references to WATsafe ▪ Provided more detail on Laboratory work with minimal risk ▪ Provided more detail on high risk and moderate risk hazards associated with chemicals ▪ Added reference to new workers ▪ Added the requirement that new graduate & undergraduate students (< 6 months) are required to have check-in procedures regardless of risk level.	Working Alone Standard v.1.0 OCT2024