



Health and Safety
Santé et sécurité

HAZARD

Working Alone

What does working alone mean?

PSAC defines working alone as being the only worker present at an isolated worksite where assistance is not readily available in the event of injury, illness or emergency.

When someone works alone, they do not have competent supervision or guidance to ensure that appropriate controls are in place and safe procedures are followed. Isolated workers may not be receiving adequate supervision and that can lead to unsafe work. Having access to adequate training, safe work procedures and emergency response measures is paramount to their health and safety.

Why is working alone hazardous?

Many jobs require two people to be done safely. When a worker is alone in jobs where exposure to a serious hazard is part of the working conditions, there is a greater chance of serious injury. A worker who has been seriously injured while working alone also may not be able to get immediate help or assistance and as a result, could suffer further injury or death.

Hazards that place the worker at risk include:

- Falling
- Vehicle accidents
- Burns

- Harassment and Violence
- Face-to-face contact with clients
- Mechanical hazards
- Exposure to extreme heat or cold
- Working nights
- Handling pesticides
- Lifting heavy objects
- Compliance/enforcement duties

What are the legal requirements?

Employers are legally obligated to provide a healthy and safe workplace. Although specific requirements for working alone vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, employer policies and procedures should be developed and implemented in all workplaces.

What can you do with your Health and Safety Committee to reduce the risks?

STEP 1: IDENTIFY TASKS AND HAZARDS

The first step is to identify tasks that require working alone. It is best to get the employer's cooperation at this stage. However, if the employer does not support this initiative, locals should help identify these tasks, along with the risks, hazards and potential problems.



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STEP 2: ENSURE THERE IS A WORKING ALONE POLICY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations can include:

a. Developing or re-examining employer policies regarding working alone.

The policy should list all tasks with inherent dangers that should never be done alone and ensure sufficient staff are available to comply with this policy. The policy should also instruct members not to attempt to perform work identified as hazardous without the assistance of a second person.

b. Developing written procedures covering dangerous work situations, including on:

- What to do in an emergency
- How to get help
- Reporting accidents or near misses
- Using alarms and communication equipment
- Responsibilities of supervisors.

c. Establishing a check-in procedure.

The procedure could be as little as an email at the start and end of each day. However, in higher-risk occupations, much more frequent check-ins and/or ongoing monitoring could be required. The interval between check-ins is based on the risk involved in doing the work. As new technology becomes available, other options may be available to workers.

This interval between check-ins needs to be determined by the supervisor and the employee, in consultation with the local Health and Safety Committee and clearly documented.

Written procedures must also include the steps to be taken if a check-in/out is missed.

STEP 3: FOLLOW UP ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Education and training requirements should be included in the Working Alone Policy, but putting pen to paper isn't enough. The Health and Safety Committee or Policy Committee should ensure that the employer is also providing the required education and training so that all workers fully understand the policy and procedures and are fully trained to recognize and deal with the hazards they face in their work. Training must be offered to all new employees. Refreshers must be provided for all workers on a regular basis, and reports on all training activities should be brought to the attention of the policy committee at the very least on an annual basis.