

4.23 Work Alone Policy

Intent

The employer will strive to ensure that all appropriate safeguards are enacted to protect our employees that must work alone or in isolation. This policy has been adopted to provide a consistent approach to these types of situations.

For the purposes of this policy, “to work alone” means working in a location or on a shift where assistance is not readily available in the event of an injury, illness or emergency.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees always and without exception.

Unionized employees are requested to refer to their current Collective Agreement for specific information pertaining to this Work Alone Policy. Where the Collective Agreement is silent, bargaining members shall refer to the contents of this policy. In situations where the directions of this policy cover issues also in the Collective Agreement, the Collective Agreement will be the final authority.

Guidelines

Whenever a worker is required to work alone, The employer shall:

- Conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the work.
- Take all reasonable steps to control any hazard(s) that cannot be reasonably eliminated.
- Communicate the findings of the hazard assessment in writing to all affected employees.
- Establish an effective means of communication (telephone, radio, etc.) between the employee and persons capable of responding to them.
- If an effective means of communication is not practical or available, another staff member will check in on the employee as appropriate.
- Provide employee training and education to limit the dangers of working alone.
- Investigate all accidents/incidents, and take all reasonable steps to prevent a re-occurrence.
- Report all situations, incidents or near misses where being alone increased the level of inherent danger to the situation, and make appropriate reasonable changes.

The employer will perform a thorough workplace hazard assessment for any situations where an employee is required to work alone. The workplace hazard assessment will investigate the following issues and identify practical solutions:

- Determine whether it is reasonable/safe for the employee to work alone.
- Determine the length of time the employee will be required to work alone, and establish reasonable limitations for the duration of this type of work.
- Determine the legalities of the type of work performed alone, e.g. restrictions on working in a confined space, or performing lock-out operations.
- Identify the time of day the worker will be required to work alone.
- Determine the most appropriate form of communication.

- Ensure that all emergency communication systems are in proper working order.
- Establish any physical or elemental hazards associated with the location.
- Examine the security features of the workplace (e.g. security cameras, alarms, etc.) to ensure the safety and well-being of the employee.
- Where possible, ensure the employee is in a position of high-visibility.
- Ensure that all windows are clear to provide maximum visibility.
- Determine the accessibility of the workplace to any potentially necessary emergency services.
- Ensure that the employee assigned to work alone has received the appropriate levels of training and education.
- Determine the appropriate forms of personal protective equipment required, and ensure that they are readily available, in good working order, and the employee has been properly trained in their use.
- Determine any required machinery, tools or equipment that will be necessary to perform the work.
- Establish any potential factors of fatigue that may affect the safety of the worker, and their quality of work.
- Determine whether the employee will be required to work with money or other valuables, and establish any safeguards required.
- Establish the employee's level of personal health to minimize potential health hazards associated with working alone (e.g. pre-existing medical condition that may increase their risk of becoming ill or injured while alone).

To ensure the safety of employees that must work alone, the following check-in procedure will be used:

- Management will be responsible for the preparation of a daily work plan to establish the location and duration the employee will be working alone.
- Management will ensure that a communication device for the employee to check-in with is readily available, and in a convenient location.
- Define the appropriate intervals of time for the employee working alone to check-in either visually or by using an approved communication device;
- Ensure that the schedule of visual or communication-based check-in is adhered to with a written log for documentation purposes.
- Identify an employee to act as the main point of contact for the employee working alone, as well as a backup.
- Establish a code word for use when the employee requires emergency assistance.
- Develop an emergency action plan to be followed if the employee working alone does not check-in on schedule.

The employer will take all appropriate precautions to ensure the safety of employees that are required to work alone with responsibilities for handling cash and valuables in the following manner:

- The employer will ensure that employees are in positions of high-visibility.
- Cash on hand will be reduced using a safe or drop box to deter the possibility of robbery. This policy will be advertised in a highly visible manner.

- Employees that are required to handle cash while working alone will be provided with training in robbery awareness and prevention to ensure that they take the appropriate steps to avoid a robbery, and/or act appropriately in the event of a robbery.
- Employees are required to cooperate in the event of any robbery, and immediately surrender to the demands of the robber by supplying them with any available cash or merchandise. Employees are far more valuable than any amount of cash or merchandise.
- Employees should contact the police, appropriate emergency services, and management when it is safe to do so.
- Security systems will be maintained to deter the possibility of any potential robbery.
- Wherever reasonably practical, the employer will avoid requiring employees to perform hazardous work alone, and will schedule this type of work to be completed during normal work hours, in the presence of other employees.
- Where it is necessary to perform hazardous work alone, employees will be required to utilize the check-in procedure, and communication devices provided to ensure that the employee is capable of checking-in at appropriate intervals.
- Training and education will be provided to ensure that the employee is knowledgeable in safe work practices, use of personal protective equipment, use of all required machinery and tools, as well as hazard identification and hazard avoidance.
- Personal protective equipment, required tools/machinery and first-aid materials will be supplied.
- Employees that are required to travel alone shall utilize the check-in procedures to ensure their ongoing communication with the company.
- A travel plan will be created for each instance of employee travel that provides details pertaining to the proposed destination, estimated time of arrival, return time and/or date, hotel accommodation, contact information, mode of travel, and alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc.
- Training and education to ensure that employees travelling alone can evaluate and avoid potential risks/hazards will be provided.