



Working Alone Guidelines

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we must take every reasonable precaution in the circumstances for the protection of a worker. This procedure applies to all University of Toronto students, staff and faculty who may be expected to work alone during the course of their work. Working Alone can be defined as working where assistance is not readily available should injury, illness or emergency occur. “Alone” situations can occur where the worker is out of visual or verbal contact, and contact cannot be expected from another person for a period of time. It includes working in physical isolation and can occur during normal working hours, evenings, overnight or weekends.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors/Management/Principle Investigators

- Identify work areas/activities and workers who are required to work alone.
- Ensure that a Job Safety Analysis (JSA) and risk assessment is completed where necessary and that they are readily available to workers. <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Job-Safety-Analysis-Form-November-2019.pdf>. Ensure controls identified in the JSA or risk assessment are followed.
- Use the below procedure (see section 3.0 Procedures) and develop additional written procedures (e.g. specific for the business unit) and implement appropriate measures and precautions based on these procedures.
- Ensure that workers who are expected to work alone are provided with the training, equipment, personal protective equipment (PPE) or other resources as identified by the JSA, Risk Assessment or work procedures.
- Ensure there is a written emergency response plan for working alone (what to do, how to do it, and who to call, etc.)

Workers

- Obtain supervisor approval prior to working alone.
- Review applicable JSA or other work procedures before start of work and follow all safety procedures and use equipment and/or PPE as defined in the JSA or work procedure.
- Report any health and safety hazards to supervisors. Where applicable, advise supervisors of any changes in conditions, circumstances or health conditions that may require additional considerations for working alone.
- Know where the emergency response plan is and familiarize yourself before working alone.

3.0 GENERAL PROCEDURE

1. Obtain approval from supervisor/management/PI prior to working alone.
2. Supervisor/management/PI to conduct a JSA and Risk Assessment (refer to Table 1 below for additional guidance) to determine where working alone is permitted and identify hazards associated with the work location and tasks involved when working alone. Where possible, take required actions to eliminate identified hazards first prior to implementing additional hierarchy of controls (e.g. engineering, administration, PPE, etc.). If applicable, refer to the Laboratory Safety Program for any additional working alone considerations in laboratories (<https://ehs.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Laboratory-Safety-Program.pdf>)
3. For any procedures for working alone, ensure the following steps are in place in addition to established procedures (JSA) minimizing and controlling identified hazards specific to the location and task:
 - a. Have a means of communication available to the employee (e.g. cellphones, etc.)
 - b. Ensure staff are aware of and have access to all required emergency plans, contacts and phone numbers.
 - c. Develop a check-in procedure (e.g. call supervisor/buddy regularly, locations for visual check, etc.) with defined frequencies (e.g. hourly, etc.)
 - i. Determine if a verbal check-in is adequate or visual check
 - ii. If working in areas where cellphone service is unreliable, use alternative methods of communication (e.g. cameras, radios, site visits, written logs, etc.)
 - iii. Contact person/buddy system to know where, how and when to activate the emergency plan
 - d. Ensure staff working alone are aware and trained on procedures per the U of T Campus Police working alone program (see section 4.0 below).

Table 1 Risk Assessment Guidance (adopted from CCOHS¹, UofTChemistry² and UofWaterloo³)

Risk Level	Examples of High Risk Activities	General Procedures
High Risk	Open flame associated with flammable solvents The activity and quantities involve the potential for fire, out of control reaction or explosion and/or involves the use of highly toxic, highly corrosive, pyrophoric or otherwise dangerous chemicals. Acutely toxic/ hazardous chemicals or products (e.g. pyrogenic chemicals, etc.) based on SDS Alignment of open beam class 3B and 4 lasers Hot work where fire watch is required Working at heights In Confined Spaces or trenches or situations in need of SCBA Electrical systems (>750 volts) Hazardous equipment or tasks that could cause critical injuries or risk of drowning (e.g. chainsaws, etc.) Work with public where there is high potential for violence.	Avoid having a lone worker in a high risk activity.
Moderate Risk	Wet lab work not involving highly hazardous materials or use of materials in a highly controlled environment, or using amounts that are very limited Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs Radioactive materials (above exempt quantities)/X-rays/Class 3B and 4 lasers (no alignment) Exposed, energized electrical systems Work in isolated areas (field) Work with general public or handling cash	Recommend to have an individual nearby (shouting distance) in addition to the low risk precautions (below). Specific procedures (JSA) on how to perform tasks must be present, with staff trained and aware of procedures as well as emergency procedures
Low Risk	Laboratory work with minimal risk, the use of low hazard and non-toxic materials (analytical equipment, monitoring equipment or process, etc.) Routine office work or study Custodial work Building maintenance with low risk tasks	Individuals may work alone with the following precautions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a means of communication available to the employee (e.g. cellphones) • Ensure staff are aware of and have access to all required emergency contacts and phone numbers. • Develop a check-in procedure (e.g. call supervisor/buddy regularly, locations, etc.) with defined frequencies (e.g. hourly, etc.) • Ensure staff working alone are aware and trained on procedures per the Campus Police working alone program.

4.0 WORKING ALONE RESOURCES

Campus Police Working Alone Programs. For students, staff and faculty who are working alone in isolated areas on the campus and for individuals with ongoing personal safety concerns. A safety assessment can also be performed on your work space to help determine and mitigate safety risks. For St. George, contact the UofT Campus Police (416-978-2323) <https://campuspolice.utoronto.ca/work-alone/> to register and provide them with all necessary information (where you are working; how long you will be there; and phone number to receive check-ins.). If an incident occurs or if registrants cannot be reached, Campus Police Special Constables can respond immediately. For UTM refer to <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/campus-police/safety-programs/work-alone-walksafe-programs>. For UTSC refer to <https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/police/lone-worker>

Walksafe/Travel Safer. For St. George, TravelSafer <http://campuspolice.utoronto.ca/travelsafer-2/> a security guard or special constable will escort you anywhere on campus or to a subway station. TravelSafer staff are available 24/7 and 365 days a year. Call 416-978-SAFE (7233) to arrange a walk. If services are not available, contact UofT Campus Police at 416-978-2323. For UTM refer to <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/campus-police/safety-programs/work-alone-walksafe-programs>. For UTSC refer to <https://www.utsc.utoronto.ca/police/travel-safer>

General Emergency Procedures. Call **911** for immediate police, fire or medical emergency. Report urgent matters (suspicious persons/trespassers, etc.) to UofT Campus Police at 416-978-2222. For non-urgent matters, contact Campus Police at 416-978-2323. For the UTM Campus Police, call 905-569-4333 for urgent matters and 905-828-5200 for general inquiries. For the UTSC Campus Police Services, call 416-978-2222 for urgent matters and 416-287-7398 for general inquiries.

Report all accident/incidents to your supervisor. Ensure to report immediately to your supervisor for any workplace accidents, injuries, illness or incidents and your supervisor will submit an online accident/incident report on the EHS website: <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/report-an-incident/>

1 CCOHS - <https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/workingalone.html>

2 UofT Department of Chemistry – www.chemistry.utoronto.ca/

3 UofWaterloo - <https://uwaterloo.ca/safety-office/occupational-health-safety/working-alone-guideline>