York University

Working Alone Program

Prepared by: Occupational Health and Safety and The Department of Security Services

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WORKING ALONE PROGRAM

Introduction:

A significant number of job functions have been and will continue to be performed by workers working alone. Therefore, areas where workers work alone must develop safe work procedures.

The Working Alone Protocol shall be incorporated into Unit Specific Emergency Preparedness Plan for the departmental area.

Objectives:

The objectives of the Working Alone Program are:

1. To identify risks to workers working alone and to try to eliminate, minimize or control the risks.
2. To provide assistance for workers who work alone.
3. To provide an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for workers working alone in the event of an accident or emergency. See the “Requirements” section below for examples.

Application:

This program applies to those departments that have workers who work alone on a regular basis. The program should be communicated to all workers.

In departments where workers work alone after hours on occasion (e.g., 6 pm-7 am weekdays and anytime on weekends or holidays) refer to the Why Work Alone program offered by Security Services (www.yorku.ca/security) and the goSAFE service (www.yorku.ca/gosafe).

Assessment:

When assessing the conditions or circumstances under which the worker is required to work alone, particular job functions will have hazards that may be low, medium or high risk or a combination of the three. The degree of risk involved does not eliminate the requirement of developing control measures to minimize the risks.

Example of low risk

Work that takes place during normal business hours (e.g., 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, etc.), where no cash or customer service function is involved. Be mindful of workers making deliveries in isolated areas.
Example of medium risk

Work that takes place after normal business hours in areas with little or no controlled access (e.g. not locked or alarmed).

Example of high risk

Work that takes place during or after normal business hours where cash and customer service functions occur or when handling of hazardous materials/chemicals (e.g. science laboratories).

Requirements:

In departments where workers work alone on a regular basis, the departmental supervisor should:

(a) Develop the Working Alone Protocol (see appendix I) specific to the area.

The protocol should include, but shall not be limited, to the following:

- Identification of the work location (should include department/faculty and rooms and locations).
- Identification of the hazards that may arise out of the location of the workspace or in connection with the work being performed.
- The actions taken to eliminate or minimize identified hazards.
- The means of communication readily available to the worker in the event of an emergency, e.g., telephone, cell phone, radio, panic buttons, buddy system, check-ins, etc..
- Details of how emergency assistance will be obtained and provided in the event of an injury/illness or incident which may endanger the health and safety of the worker working alone.
- **In case of a fire/life emergency situation call 911. For an urgent Security matter (or after dialing 911), call Security Control at (416) 736-5333 or 33333 (on campus) and identify yourself, what the emergency is and the location.**
- For situations requiring first aid contact York Security (416) 736-5333 or 33333 or the local first aider if available.
- Posting the names of currently certified first aiders in the workplace.
- Location of resources such as fire alarm pull stations, fire extinguishers, eye wash station, emergency shower, MSDS sheets, first aid kits, list of first aiders, small chemical spill clean up kit, telephones, pay phones, etc..
- The date of the protocol, name of the supervisor, and the name of the department or faculty.

The departmental supervisor should communicate the Working Alone Protocol to all workers in the area. If more than one worker works alone in a department, or there are multiple locations in which workers work alone for a department, this information should be reflected in the Working Alone Protocol. The Working Alone protocol shall be registered with Occupational Health and Safety. Refer to the attached protocol for distribution list.
(b) Control Measures:

One or more of the following measures should be considered depending on the risks associated with the work activity or the location of the work space:

1. Second Person or “Buddy System”

Where practicable, it is preferable to have a second person working in high risk situations. This system is mandatory for workers working in confined spaces (O.Reg.851, Sec.119.1–119.20).

2. Personal Check by Another Person

In many working alone instances, checking the worker’s well-being may be achieved by periodic visits at regular intervals by an individual, such as the employer, another worker of the employer or someone designated by the employer (such as Security Services). The worker can make the call or be contacted by another worker.

The length of time between the checks will depend on the identified hazards of the job function or location of the workspace.

3. Periodic Telephone Contact

Use of the telephone for communication at regular intervals may be adequate in low-risk working alone situations. Telephone numbers for routine calling and emergency situations must be posted prominently.

The intervals between these contacts must be determined by the degree of risk identified in the workplace. Maintaining telephone calls to specific times would reduce the number of false-alarm situations arising from the person working alone or contact person not being available due to non-emergency situations.

4. Scheduled Check-in Times

Scheduled check-in times would require workers to check their name on a piece of paper at certain intervals throughout the day (e.g. start of shift, lunch break etc). This could be monitored by the supervisor or by co-workers who would notify their supervisor when someone has not checked in at an appropriate time.

5. Security Systems

Call the Department of Security Services at 416-650-8000 for advice on this option.

When considering the use of mechanical equipment (e.g., keyed or card access) or electronic surveillance (e.g., alarm systems) to address a working
alone situation, security systems in use at the workplace may be modified so that they will monitor a particular workspace where a worker is working alone.

Many workplaces utilize cell phones, two-way radios, emergency sounding devices, panic buttons, visual monitoring systems, corner mirrors and similar equipment. This equipment is used as part of everyday operations. For reasons inherent to each particular operation, either wireless or hard-wired systems have been adopted.

The most important point to consider is the suitability of safety measures and systems to worker's needs. For example, if an employee is deaf, visible alarms should be in the workplace.

Roles and Responsibilities

Supervisor or Employer (OHS Act Sec. 27)

In addition to the responsibilities under the OHS Act (Sec.25, 27)

(1) A supervisor is responsible for implementing control measures so that the well-being of a worker who works alone or in isolation is safe guarded.
(2) Identify workers who are required to work alone.
(3) Identify necessary actions to eliminate or reduce the safety risks and implement these actions.
(4) Eliminate or reduce safety risks by:

- Providing written instructions stating limitations on and/or prohibition of specific activities while working alone.
- Providing sufficient training and instruction for safe work practices and ensuring a minimum standard of competence (such as providing protective equipment, radio, gloves, lab coat, goggles, etc.).
- Ensure a system is in place for maintaining regular contact with the person working alone.
- Completing the Work Alone Protocol (see Appendix 1)

Worker (OHS Act Sec.28)

In addition to the duties included in the OHS Act (Sec.28) a worker shall,

(a) Cooperate with the employer or supervisor implementing the Protocol.
(b) Report to his or her employer or supervisor the existence of any hazard of which he or she is aware.
(c) Report the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware and which may endanger himself, herself or another worker.
Occupational Health and Safety

(a) Provides consultation in deciding the most appropriate control measures.
(b) Reviews and keep copies of departmental “Working Alone Protocols” for all departments.
(c) Ensure that the department has completed the Workplace Violence Risk Assessment, the Unit Specific Emergency Preparedness Plan, and that employees have attended relevant training based on the level of risk.

Department of Security Services (www.yorku.ca/security)

(a) Provides assistance or advice for workers working alone occasionally, refer to Security Service’s “Why Work Alone Program”.
(b) Provides advice and assistance for any safety issues at the University.
(c) Provides security assessments.

Training

All workers working alone should be trained in:

1) Workplace Violence Awareness (e-learning)
2) The use of any relevant alarm systems (contact Security Services at 416-650-8000), provided safety tools, the departmental Working Alone Protocol and safe working practices.

Please see www.yorku.ca/security/safetytips for Safety Tips by the Department of Security Services.

When working late, staff members are encouraged to take advantage of York University’s complimentary goSAFE service, which operates from 6:00 pm to 2:00 am during the Fall & Winter terms, and from 8:00 pm to 2:00 am during the Summer term. goSAFE staff members can meet workers anywhere on-campus and safely escort them to any other on-campus location, such as public transit stops, campus buildings or parking lots. Limited off-campus service is available through the Village Shuttles, which provides service to designated stops both on and off campus. For more information, call 416-736-5454 or extension 55454, or visit the goSAFE website at www.yorku.ca/gosafe.
Appendix I – Working Alone Protocol

Location(s) of where worker(s) is working alone ______________________________

1. Is there a customer service function (e.g., serving students)? Yes □ No □
   If yes please explain____________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

2. Please indicate hours of worker working alone__________________________
   Is work performed in isolated areas? Yes □ No □
   If yes please indicate how it is isolated______________________________

3. List the potential hazards that may be encountered_____________________
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

4. List the action taken to eliminate or minimize identified hazards.
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

5. List type of communication to be used by the worker (e.g., telephone, cell phone, radio, buddy system, check-ins, etc.).
   ________________________________________________________________

6. Details of how emergency assistance will be obtained and provided in the event of an emergency.
   ________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________

In case of a fire/life emergency situation call 911. For an urgent Security matter (or after dialing 911), call Security Control at (416) 736-5333 or 33333 (on campus) and identify yourself, what the emergency is and the location.
7. Post emergency numbers near the telephones.

8. For situations requiring first aid contact York Security 416-736-5333 (ext. 33333) or the local first aider if available.

9. Indicate the location of the nearest:
   - First Aid Kit (s)
   - Fire alarm pull station (s)
   - Fire extinguisher(s)

10. Does the worker working alone use chemicals? Yes ☐ No ☐
    If yes please indicate the location of the nearest:
    - Eye wash station
    - Emergency shower
    - Material Safety Data Sheets
    - Chemical Spills Kit

11. Indicate any other safety/emergency procedures that are available in your Department:

12. Indicate how employees have been notified of this program (e.g., email, training, meeting etc.).

Department/Faculty ____________________________________________

Name of Supervisor ___________________________ Date ________________

Distribution List:
- Maintain a copy in your departmental file
- Area Health and Safety Officer
- Occupational Health and Safety, Kinsmen Building, 2nd Floor