

Working alone

Why it's important

People who are required to work alone may be at risk if something happens to them while they are alone. The risks depend upon the hazards associated with the work, the length of time the work is being performed and the remoteness of the work location.

A formal working alone policy should be established when significant risks are involved. All employees need to know about the working alone policy, what's in it and how it can help in the case of an emergency.

How to control the hazards

- Written safe work procedures for hazardous work are the important first step to minimize the risks associated with working alone.
- There should be a sign-out procedure to track the location of employees who are working alone in remote locations.
- An employer can supplement the sign-out procedure with an effective means of communication for a worker to contact a supervisor and others capable of responding in an emergency. This can include:
 - cell or satellite phone
 - radio contact
 - GPS-based mobile worker safety devices such as the SPOT unit
 - scheduled check-in points
 - alarm systems, buddy systems and regular time checks by a supervisor.
- Workers should not be performing high-risk or non-routine maintenance tasks when they are working alone.
- Workers need to have access to a first aid kit and other emergency equipment such as a fire extinguisher in the event of an emergency.
- A clear and comprehensive written emergency response plan is very important. The written plan should include the following information:

- Names and positions of qualified first aiders
- Emergency telephone numbers: ground or air ambulance, hospital, police and fire services, and the Ministry of Labour
- For ground ambulance, the emergency response plan needs to include the name of the nearest community, the best highway route, and directions to the work site.
- For air ambulance, landing site requirements, the nearest large lake, major landmarks and geographical coordinates need to be listed.

Show and tell

Make sure your policy is up-to-date with current information that could change from job site to job site.

- Share your company's working alone policy with participants
- Ensure that each participant is aware of where the policy is posted
- Make sure that each worker can access that information in an emergency.

Notes:
