

## WORKING ALONE PROGRAM

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### PURPOSE

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The purpose of UFV's Working Alone Program is to provide for measures to protect the health and safety of, and minimize risk to, any employees and students who work alone or in isolation. Compliance with this program helps to ensure that UFV demonstrates due diligence and operates within Occupational Health and Safety Regulation as outlined by the BC Workers Compensation Act. This program will guide you through the risk assessment process and aide with the development of site-specific Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in an effort to ensure employee and student safety when working alone or in isolation.

### APPLICATION

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This program applies to all UFV campuses and includes all employees, student, visitors, volunteers, contractors and subcontractors who work alone or in isolation.

### DEFINITIONS

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Administrative Control: the provision, use and scheduling of work activities and resources in the workplace, including planning, organizing, staffing and coordinating to manage risk.

Buddy System: a system of organizing work so that employers can be seen or heard by another employee located in close proximity to his/her workstation

Engineering Controls: the physical arrangement, design, or alteration of workstations, equipment, materials or other aspects of the physical work environment to manage risk.

Office Hours: the UFV hours during which there are people available to help in the case of an incident. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Some departments do not have office hours that do not fall within this range. In such cases, the department must stipulate what they consider to be their office hours.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): written procedures that define the techniques, processes and best practices required to conduct work safely. SOPs are required where individuals are working alone in situations that could accidentally result in a critical injury, health impairment or other foreseeable life threatening emergency.

Supervisor: person who has charge of a workplace or authority over another employee.

Working Alone: working alone or in isolation" according to The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation, means "to work in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available to the worker in case of an emergency or in case the worker is injured or in ill health." In these circumstances extra precautions and requirements may be warranted.

Worksite: any place where work is performed, including locations such as laboratories, offices, or field work.

### ASSESSMENT

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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. All workers are to be made aware of this protocol. The Working Alone protocol shall be registered with the Occupational Health and Safety Office.

*Examples of low risk*

Work that takes place during normal business hours (8:30 am - 4:30 pm), where no cash or customer service function is involved.

*Examples of medium risk*

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

*Examples of high risk*

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

**CONTROL MEASURES**

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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 practical it would be preferable to have a second person working in higher risk situations. This system is mandatory for workers working in confined spaces

**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). Worker can make the call or be contacted by another worker. The length of time between the checks will depend on the estimated hazard 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 at 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 Security Services Office for advice on this option. When considering the use of mechanical equipment (e.g., keyed or card access) or electrical surveillance (e.g., alarm systems) to accommodate the working alone situation, security systems in use at the workplace may be modified so that they will monitor a particular worker who is working alone, as well as the status of the workplace itself.

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

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### SUPERVISOR

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The supervisor shall:

- Identify individuals required to work alone;
- Perform a *risk assessment* to identify hazards and assess risks;

#### Risk Assessment Questions:

- a) What tasks are being performed?
  - b) Are there regulations or existing policies that prohibit individuals from working alone on the task being assessed?
  - c) What hazards are associated with the work being assessed?
  - d) What consequences result from a worst case scenario?
  - e) Could an injury prevent an employee or student from calling from or leaving the area?
  - f) Are there personal safety issues for individuals working alone after regular working hours i.e. harassment and/or violence?
  - g) Is there the potential for other people to be in the area if emergency assistance is required;
  - h) What is the typical emergency response time by Safety & Security?
  - i) How secure is the work area?
  - j) What is the individuals training and experience?
  - k) Are there any physical disabilities or medical conditions?
- After this risk assessment take any necessary steps to eliminate the hazards;
  - Eliminate the hazards and minimize the risks by using engineering controls, administrative controls or a combination of the two controls;
  - Develop a site-specific Working Alone SOPs to address the risks;
  - Communicate the SOPs to all workers in their jurisdiction;
  - Ensure understanding and compliance with the SOPs;
  - Review the site-specific SOPs annually; and,
  - Maintain documentation of site-specific SOPs within each department.

### DEPARTMENT HEAD/DIRECTOR

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The Department Head/Director shall:

- Provide the resources and direction required to support the Working Alone Program;
- Direct supervisors in their areas to develop and implement a site-specific SOPs and appropriate preventive and response procedures for working alone or in isolation; and,
- Monitor to ensure that SOPs are communicated, enforced, and effective.

### EMPLOYEE/STUDENT

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The Employee/Student shall:

- Participate in the evaluation of the risks associated with tasks which involve persons working along; and,
- Follow the procedures outlined in any SOPs implemented for their protection.
- Comply with the site-specific SOPs; and
- Advise the supervisor of arising concerns.

### OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICE (OHSO)

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The OHSO shall:

- Act as a resource and provide guidance to departments and supervisors developing site specific SOPs; and,
- Revise the Working Alone Program as required.

## SAFETY & SECURITY

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Safety & Security shall:

- Provide safety surveillance and/or emergency response as required; and,
- Participate in the assessment of SOPs when requested.

## GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING SOPs

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When it is determined that working alone or in isolation increases the risk to health and safety of an employee or student, special arrangements must be made to minimize this risk. Supervisors must take necessary steps to identify potential hazards in working alone or in isolation situations, and eliminate or reduce the risks from the hazards. To do this, supervisors must review all worksites under their jurisdiction. When risks are identified but after consultation with the involved individual(s), it is decided that they can work along safely under controlled conditions, the supervisor shall provide SOPs that include but shall not be limited to the following:

- Names of individual(s) or positions who are required to work alone or in isolation;
- The work location and the conditions which working alone or in isolation is permitted;
- The types of duties that may be conducted while working alone stating limitations on and/or prohibitions of specific activities while working alone;
- Identification of risks to the worker in terms of the nature of their work, isolation, and conditions at the worksite;
- Where supervisors determine that risks cannot be eliminated they must take the following steps to mitigate the risk(s):
  - a) Establish minimum standards of competence and ensure the minimum standards are met by providing sufficient training and instruction in safe work practices.
  - b) Establish an effective communication system i.e. radio, telephone, buddy system, personal alarm devices, etc.
  - c) Provide personal protective equipment (PPE).
  - d) Provide details of how emergency assistance will be obtained in the event of an injury or incident which may endanger the health and safety of the person working alone.
  - e) Provide emergency and survival supplies
- Implement procedures to eliminate or minimize the identified risks, such as:
  - a) Maintain regular contact with the person working alone or in isolation.
- Maintain documentation of the site-specific SOPs; and,
- Communicate the site-specific SOPs to all employees/students under their jurisdiction and ensure understanding and compliance.

Attached are samples of general and specific SOPs. Note that it is **STRONGLY** recommended that handling hazardous substance be prohibited when an employee or student is working alone or in isolation. For further assistance in identifying hazards and work limitations and drafting a site-specific SOP contact the Occupational Health & Safety Office (OHSO).

**Appendix A: Generic Working Alone SOP for Personal Safety Issues Associated with Individuals Working Alone (Sample)**

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**University of the Fraser Valley  
Persons Working Alone SOP**

**Department:** Occupational Health & Safety Office

**Locations:** A265

**Individual(s) Involved:** John Doe

**Work Project:** Filing after regular hours in isolated area.

**Duration of Project:** March 2012 – August 2012

**Safety Procedures in Place to Minimize Risk:**

**Work:**

- a) Work related safety procedures reviewed and work area assessed for safety hazards.
- b) Work area secured against unauthorized ingress into the area.

**Training:**

- a) Review of safety and emergency procedures.

**Communications:**

- a) Safety & Security to be notified by person working alone indicating the location and an estimated duration of work project.
- b) Safety & Security notified prior to leaving the area on completion of the project.

**Emergency Procedures:**

- a) Fire and Medical Emergency response posted and reviewed with person working alone.
- b) Emergency response telephone number 7770 for Safety & Security to be posted on the phone.
- c) Emergency response telephone number 911 for offsite location to be posted on the phone.

**Name of Supervisor:** Mr. Safety

**Signature:**

**Name of Individual (s):** John Doe

**Signature:**

## Appendix B Working Alone Standard Operating Procedures (Sample)

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### University of the Fraser Valley Persons Working Alone SOP

**Department:** Chemistry

**Locations:** Chemistry Lab

**Individual(s) Involved:** John Doe

**Work Project:** Solvent distillation using industrial grade solvents

**Duration of Project:** September 2012 – May 2013

#### Safety Procedures in Place to Minimize Risk:

##### Work:

- a) Safety Procedures detailed in the approved research project reviewed with all persons working alone.
- b) Work area assessed for safety hazards.

##### Training:

- a) All persons involved in the project have received task specific safety training.
- b) All persons involved in the project have successfully completed the WHMOIS training course and have reviewed and have access to the Lab Safety Manual.
- c) All persons involved in the project have access to and have read the applicable Material Safety Data Sheets.

##### Communications:

- a) Safety & Security to be notified by person working alone indicating the location and an estimated duration of work project.
- b) Operation of panic alarm to Safety & Security tested on a routine basis.
- c) Persons working alone instructed to check for and make contact with individuals working in adjacent areas.
- d) Safety & Security notified prior to leaving the area on completion of the project.

##### Emergency Procedures:

- a) Fire and Medical Emergency response posted and reviewed with person working alone.
- b) Emergency response telephone number 7770 for Safety & Security to be posted on the phone.
- c) Emergency response telephone number 911 for offsite location to be posted on the phone.
- d) Fume hood low flow alarm tested on a regular basis and procedure reviewed with all persons working alone.

**Name of Supervisor:** Mr. Safety

**Signature:**

**Name of Individual (s):** John Doe

**Signature:**