

Working alone

Explain dangers

Working alone means that you're the only person on a site or you're isolated from other workers on a site.

If you become injured, trapped, or unconscious when working alone and not able to call for help, it may be some time before anyone finds out you're in trouble or where you're located. This delay in getting help or treatment can cause an injury to become more serious, even deadly.

Identify controls

When working alone, it is important that you:

- Are aware of real and potential hazards in the area
- Are trained to recognize and control these hazards
- Are provided with the procedures and equipment to do the job safely
- Have a check-in policy or other communication procedure in place that identifies if you're in trouble and where you are.

Communication when working alone is crucial. Ensure that:

- A procedure for checking in has been established. Either a person (e.g., supervisor) has been designated to check on you at regular intervals and at the end of the day or you have a designated time or schedule for calling in.
- The check-in procedure and intervals for contact are clearly understood by you and the designated contact person.
- The contact person is aware of your work schedule each day and is kept up-to-date on changes to it.
- The communication equipment you're using is in good working order.

If a site telephone will be used, it should be clearly identified, conveniently located, and working properly. The number of the person to be contacted should be posted on or near the phone.

Mobile devices can also be used. Test the units on-site to make sure that reception is reliable and no obstructions or interference is blocking phone communications.

In situations that are especially dangerous, check-ins should be done more often. These situations include:

- Working with high voltages
- Working in extreme temperatures or weather conditions
- Working at heights
- Working in areas where a gas leak could displace oxygen
- Working on or around moving equipment or machinery
- Working in remote locations.

If working in a remote location, it's good practice to contact emergency services to make sure they would be able to respond in case something happens. Otherwise, other arrangements should be made.

There are some jobs that should NEVER be done by anyone working alone. These include working in confined spaces and working with toxic chemicals. For these types of jobs, at least two workers are always required.

Demonstrate

Develop a working alone communication plan with your workers. Determine who the designated contact person will be, how they will communicate, and how often.

Discuss some examples at your worksite of when workers may work alone and go over the procedures for such work.

Ensure all safety and work-related procedures are spelled out in the company health and safety policy and review them with your crew.