

Working alone

Explain dangers

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

If you become injured, trapped, or unconscious when working alone and are not able to call for help, it may be some time before anyone finds out that you are in trouble or where you are 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 procedure in place that lets people know if you are in trouble and identifies 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 are 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 contact 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 interferences are 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 is 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, working with toxic chemicals, and working in trenches and excavations. For these types of jobs, at least two workers are always required.

REMEMBER: Certain job tasks such as carrying heavy material or securing a ladder may also require the help of a second worker.

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 program and review them with your crew.