



# COLLEGE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

## OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE

### TOPIC: WORKING ALONE

<b>Procedure No.</b>	HR-405-PR-5	<b>Division</b>	Human Resources
<b>Supersedes</b>	n/a	<b>Board Policy Ref.</b>	n/a
<b>Related Policies</b>	HR-405	<b>Effective Date:</b>	February 8, 2022

### PURPOSE & SCOPE

College of the North Atlantic (CNA) is committed to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for employees working alone. The Working Alone Procedure provides guidance on risk assessment, hazard control and development of safe work practices and procedures to mitigate risk to an employee's health and safety.

This procedure will apply to employees working alone within or outside CNA facilities.

### 1.0 DEFINITIONS

**High Risk Activities:** activities where the potential for the occurrence of incidents or injuries is deemed to be likely and where the severity of the injury or incident will bring serious consequences. Some high risk activities may actually be prohibited in certain circumstances. High risk activities can involve risks from a variety of sources such as when working:

- At heights;
- In confined spaces (e.g., tanks, grain bins or elevators, culverts, etc.);
- With electricity or other forms of hazardous energy;
- With hazardous products;
- With hazardous equipment such as chainsaws or firearms; and
- With the public, where there is a potential for violence.

**Low Risk Activities:** activities where the potential for the occurrence of incidents and injuries is deemed to be unlikely and where the severity of an incident or injury is generally thought not to have serious consequences.

Risk Assessment: the overall assessment method / process that includes: (i) identification of hazards and risk factors that have the potential to cause harm (hazard identification); (ii) analysis and evaluation of the risk associated with hazards (risk analysis and risk evaluation); and, (iii) determination of appropriate ways to eliminate the hazard, or control the risk when the hazard cannot be eliminated (risk control).

Working Alone or in Isolation: employees are alone at work when on their own; they cannot be seen or heard by other employees; cannot expect a visit from other employees for some time; and/or where assistance is not readily available when needed in case of emergency, injury or ill health. Working alone situations can occur in a CNA facility or in an isolated area, during or after regular work hours with no other persons around. Isolation also includes situations such as two employees working together but unable to get emergency help quickly due to their remote location. An employee working in an approved telework arrangement is considered to be in a working alone situation.

## **2.0 PROCEDURE**

2.1 Review of work arrangements to identify working alone situations.

2.1.1 Conduct this review by giving consideration to the following:

- Does the employee work alone for periods of time, including before or after normal working hours?
- Does the employee work away from their regular work location to meet clients or others?
- Does the employee telework?
- Does the employee work along remote routes (e.g., resource and rural roads) where assistance may not be readily available?
- Does their position require them to be in remote areas (e.g., to conduct inspections in the field)?
- Does the employee travel for work purposes?
- Does the employee work in places isolated from public view where they may be at risk of violence?
- Are other people in the vicinity?
- Will people capable of providing assistance be aware of the employee's need?

- Is it reasonable to expect those people to provide assistance?
  - Will assistance be provided within a reasonable period of time?
- 2.2 Where feasible, implement alternatives to avoid working alone situations.
- 2.3 Where a working alone situation is identified, a risk assessment shall be conducted using CNA's [Hazard Recognition, Evaluation and Control \(HREC\) Form](#).
- 2.4 Where the risk assessment identifies a hazard, appropriate controls shall be implemented to eliminate, or where elimination is not practical, minimize the risk associated with the hazard.
- 2.5 A check-in procedure shall be developed, documented and implemented for checking the well-being of an employee assigned to work alone.
- 2.6 The check-in procedure shall include the time interval between check-ins and the procedure to follow in case the employee cannot be contacted, including provisions for emergency response.
- 2.7 A person shall be designated to establish contact with the employee at predetermined intervals and the results shall be recorded by that person.
- 2.8 The check-in procedure shall be developed in consultation with the employee assigned to work alone (may also include consultation with the occupational health and safety committee, the employee health and safety representative or designate).
- 2.9 The check-in procedure shall be reviewed at least annually, or more frequently if there is:
- a. a change in work arrangements that may adversely affect an employee's well-being or safety; or
  - b. a report that the check-in procedure is not working effectively.

**3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

3.1 Employees (Who Work Alone)

It is the responsibility of employees to:

- a) Identify situations where they may be working alone;

- b) Assist completion of a risk assessment (HREC Form) in consultation with the supervisor;
- c) Assist completion of an appropriate check-in procedure in consultation with the supervisor;
- d) Maintain compliance with the check-in procedure; and
- e) Review check-in procedures regularly to ensure protocol suitability.

### 3.2 Supervisors

It is the responsibility of supervisors to:

- a) Identify situations where employees may be working alone;
- b) Complete a risk assessment (HREC Form) in consultation with employees;
- c) Develop and approve a check-in procedure, in consultation with employee (may also include consultation with the occupational health and safety committee, the employee health and safety representative or designate);
- d) Forward completed risk assessments (HREC Forms) and written check-in procedures to CNA's OHS Office (ohs@cna.nl.ca);
- e) Maintain compliance with the check-in procedure;
- f) Provide emergency response to security threats or when summoned by duress alarms, phone or other methods of notification; and
- g) Review check-in procedures regularly to ensure protocol suitability.

### 3.3 Executive

It is the responsibility of Executive to:

- a) Ensure all employees are aware of the Working Alone Procedure and the associated tools.

### 3.4 CNA Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Office

It is the responsibility of OHS Office to:

- a) Provide assistance and advice for the risk assessment and development of check-in procedures, as necessary; and
- b) Maintain electronic files of completed risk assessments (HREC Forms) and check-in procedures.

**3.5 Security**

It is the responsibility of Security, as applicable, to:

- a) Provide check-in service upon request for employees working alone; and
- b) Provide emergency response to security threats or when summoned by duress alarms, phone or other methods of notification.

**4.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

A risk assessment (using CNA's HREC Form) is to be completed by the supervisor, in consultation with the employee working alone to identify, evaluate and control hazards associated with the working alone situation. (Please see the Appendix for points to consider in the analysis, as well as sample hazard control measures.)

**5.0 CHECK-IN PROCEDURE AND COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS**

Regular contact must be maintained between the employee working alone and a designated person at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed. Regular contact can be established using email, text messaging, telephone, cell phone, two-way radio, software application, etc.

**5.1 Check-In Procedure**

A check-in procedure is required for checking the well-being of an employee assigned to work alone. It must be developed using the [Working Alone Check-In Procedure Template](#).

The supervisor will establish a check-in procedure following completion of the risk assessment. The check-in procedure shall be developed in consultation with the employee assigned to work alone (may also include consultation with the occupational health and safety committee, the employee health and safety representative or designate).

Core components of the check-in procedure must include:

- Methods and frequency of communication.

- Specific named contact person(s).
- Emergency protocols.

For most employees working alone, a telephone will be the main source of contact. If using cell phones, an employee working alone must always be sure the cell phone is close by and charged. If cell phone service is unreliable in the area, ensure there are alternative methods of communication available (e.g., use of cameras, automated warning/duress devices, global positioning system (GPS), two-way radio, site visits or satellite technology).

Maintaining regular contact with a designated person enables the employee to communicate that they are safe. The check-in procedure requires the employee to take some predetermined action to confirm they are safe and do not need help. The check-in procedure must include escalation measures in the event the employee does not reply or check-in as per the established schedule (i.e., failed efforts to contact the employee may necessitate contacting emergency services as appropriate).

The check-in procedure must be appropriate for both regular business hours as well as after office hours.

The supervisor must review the check-in procedure with the employee and ensure that appropriate training has occurred prior to working alone.

The check-in procedure should be reviewed annually and/or updated as necessary.

**Periodic Contact / Checks**

Arrange to physically check the employee's well-being by arranging periodic visits at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed. This in-person check could be performed by the supervisor, another employee / co-worker, Security Services, etc.

**7.0 AUTHORITIES**

*Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2012*

**Appendix**

**Guidance for Conducting Working Alone Risk Assessments**

When assessing working alone situations, it is essential to assess the hazards of the workplace. A good first step is to talk to the employee about the work. The employee can provide feedback about the work and possible solutions for hazard control measures. In addition, investigate past incidents at the workplace so as to identify trends and prevent recurrence.

The following points are to be considered for working alone situations; although, each working alone situation will have different circumstances.

Length of time the employee will be working alone:

1. What is a reasonable length of time for the employee to be alone?
2. Is it reasonable for the employee to be alone at all?
3. How long will the employee be alone to finish the job?
4. Is it legal for the employee to be alone while doing certain activities (e.g., working alone in confined space or during lock-out/tag-out operations or other high risk activities)?
5. What time of the day will the employee be alone?

Communication:

1. What forms of communication are available?
2. Is it necessary to “see” the employee, or is voice communication adequate?
3. Will emergency communication systems work properly in all situations?
4. If the communication systems are located in a vehicle, do you need alternate arrangements to cover the employee when away from the vehicle?

Location of the work:

1. Is the employee in a remote or isolated location (i.e., a remote location does not have to be far away, a storage room that are rarely used can be considered remote)?

2. Is transportation necessary to get there? What kind of transportation is needed?
3. Is the vehicle equipped with emergency supplies such as – food, drinking water and a first aid kit?
4. Will the employee need to carry some or all of the emergency supplies with them when leaving the vehicle?
5. What are the consequences if the vehicle breaks down?
6. Will the employee have to leave the vehicle for long periods of time?
7. Does the employee need training to be able to use the first aid equipment?

Type or nature of work:

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1. Is there adequate training and education provided for the employee to be able to work alone safely?
2. If personal protective equipment is required, is it available, is it in good working order, and has the employee been trained in its use, care and storage?
3. What machinery, tools or equipment will be used?
4. Is there a high risk activity involved?
5. Is fatigue likely to be a factor?
6. Are there extremes of temperature?
7. Is there risk of an animal attack, or poisoning/allergic reaction from insect/animal bites?
8. If the employee is working inside a locked building, how will emergency services be able to get in (e.g., an employee working alone after hours in a secure office building)?
9. Does the work involve working with money or other valuables?
10. Does the work involve seizing property or goods (e.g., repossession, recovering stolen property)?

Characteristics of the individual who is working alone:

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1. Are there pre-existing medical conditions that may increase the risk?
2. Does the employee have adequate levels of experience and training (e.g., first aid, communication systems repair, vehicle breakdowns, relevant administrative procedures and/or outdoor survival)?

Risk control measures that can be implemented to help ensure the safety of an employee working alone or in isolation include, but are not limited to:

- a. Avoid having an employee work alone or in isolation whenever possible, especially for jobs with a recognized risk.
- b. Provide appropriate training and education.
- c. Establish a written check-in procedure. Make sure regular contact is kept with all employees.
- d. Establish ways to account for people (visually or verbally) while they are working.
- e. For most employee working alone or in isolation, a phone will be the main source of contact. If work is at a desk or station, ensure there is phone access. If work is away from a main office or work station, the use of a cellular phone is very helpful. If a cellular phone is unreliable in the area, be sure to have alternative methods of communication available (e.g., use of public telephones, site visits or satellite technology).
- f. Schedule high risk tasks during normal business hours, or when another employee is capable of helping if an emergency situation arises.
- g. Position employees, where possible, in locations of highest visibility.
- h. Keep windows clear to allow the employee to be clearly visible to the public.
- i. Allow the use of a “buddy system” in high risk situations – ensure that employees are aware that this option is available to them.
- j. Where appropriate, use a security system such as video surveillance cameras, mirrors, observation windows, etc., however, ensure that informed consent is obtained from employees prior to use. Systems such as duress alarms may also be identified as a control measure, if appropriate to the situation.
- k. Should it be deemed that additional mitigation measures are warranted, options should be discussed with the OHS Manager.

Approval History	
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