



4. Working Alone

BACKGROUND

It is inevitable that during the course of performing duties on behalf of or related to the University, there are occasions that could necessitate workers to be working alone or in isolation. Staff, students and faculty on campus are permitted to work alone under the approval of their supervisor if specific conditions are met. As the supervisor, you are responsible for the safety of individuals working within your lab. Working alone or in isolation is regulated by WorkSafeBC (4.21-4.23)

www2.worksafebc.com/Publications/OHSRegulation/part4

PURPOSE

UBC strives to eliminate hazards of workers while performing their duties; if unable to eliminate a hazard, controls can be put in place to offer protection to the worker. The goal of elimination or control is to minimize disabling injuries and reduce exposures to hazards. Controls may include adequate engineering controls, sufficient training, implementation of safe operating procedures (SOPs), and use of appropriate personal protective equipment.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all individuals (including contractors, staff, students, visiting scientists and faculty) who work alone or in isolation and whose wellbeing may be compromised by factors such as pre-existing health conditions (i.e. heart condition), hazard exposure (i.e. chemical burn, toxic gas release, microbial exposure) and/or physical trauma (i.e. slip, trip or fall resulting in physical injury, injury from instruments, machines or implement).

RISK ASSESSMENT

When performing a risk assessment, supervisors must review historical data of injuries and incidents. Data search may include (but is not limited to) lab records, other labs and universities, or similar industry related experience. This search will aid in determining what types of incidents are common for this hazard and the likelihood of occurrence. In consultation with the affected worker, the supervisor can then conduct a detailed risk assessment (see attached for example). Risk assessments must be clearly documented under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

SAFE WORK PLAN

The supervisor planning any working alone projects must submit a safe work plan with the following elements well in advance of work initiation:

1. Reasons to work alone or in isolation (i.e. not having an alternative).
2. Detailed risk assessment & list of hazardous factors at the specified worksite.
3. Details of strategy to ensure safety and regulatory compliance.
4. Documentation of adequate training to the lone worker.
5. Documentation of communications to the worker(s) on hazards and the safe work plan.
6. Regular monitoring frequency and schedule stating the way of effective communication.



7. Well thought out, timely and effective emergency rescue response plan.
8. Documentation of adequate responder's training with worksite access ability.

AUTHORIZATION

Prior to initiating working alone or in isolation, the supervisor must perform a detailed risk assessment in consultation with the worker(s) and submit a safe work alone plan to the [Local Safety Committee](#) or University [Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee](#) for review and approval. The authorization / policy should be posted in the lab (see next page) to declare your lab policy.



WORKING ALONE PERMISSION

Check only 1 of the following boxes:

- ☐ In this laboratory, **PUT ROOM NUMBER HERE**, you are allowed to work alone following the procedures found in section 3 of the Laboratory Guidebook. If no procedures are in section 3, you are not allowed to work alone.

- ☐ In this laboratory, **PUT ROOM NUMBER HERE**, you are NOT allowed to work alone under any circumstances. There must be a minimum of 2 people in the laboratory at all times. Plan accordingly.

If you have any questions about this policy, contact the principal investigator for this lab.

Principal Investigator (Print Name)

Signature



WORKING ALONE RISK ASSESSMENT & SAFE WORK PLAN

This document guides the responsible party (principal investigator or lab manager) to create lab specific instructions for working alone that adhere to the working alone policy and Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. They are not meant to replace them. Other risk assessment methods are permitted provided that they provide the same level of assessment. Lab specific instructions must contain the information below, but are not restricted to this form.

1. Perform a risk assessment of the individual tasks being conducted by lab users by completing the following table in collaboration with the individual(s) affected (examples provided). Use the scoring criteria provided below to help assess hazards in your lab.

Hazard	Exposure time (E)	Severity of outcome (O)	Likelihood of outcome (L)	Total E + O + L /125
Scalpel	5	3 (Cut)	3	11
		5 (Infection)	1	11
Use of concentrated acid	2	4 (skin splash)	1	7
		4 (eye splash)	3	9

Scoring Criteria	Exposure	Severity of Outcome	Likelihood of Outcome
5	Continuously or several times a day	Death	Most likely and expected
4	Frequently (1 x per day)	Extremely serious injury / disease	50/50 chance
3	Usually	Disabling injuries	Unusual but has happened before
2	Occasionally (<1 x per month)	Minor injury	Remote but has happened before elsewhere or many years ago
1	Rarely (a few times per year or less)	Inconvenience	Conceivable but remote

High risk tasks should not be conducted in isolation:

High Risk = 9-15

Medium Risk = 7-8

Low Risk = 3-6



2. What controls, PPE or other protective actions can lower the risks associated with the tasks in question?

3. How might a person working alone obtain assistance if needed? Especially note if any activities may result in the person being unable to obtain assistance easily. Also consider the length of time the person may be alone and what forms of communication are available in the lab.

4. If a worker cannot easily and reliably obtain assistance when working alone, indicate how they might ensure that they are being regularly monitored (i.e. phone calls every 30 minutes to a contact who knows how to react when check-ins are missed). Check-ins must be regular, predetermined, and have a clear follow-up procedure (use a separate sheet if needed.)

5. Based on the above information, which activities are always permitted in this laboratory when working alone:



6. Based on the above information, which activities are not permitted when working alone in the lab?

7. Based on the above information, which activities are permitted when using the communication strategies listed in point number 4?
