**5.5 Working Alone Safety Program**

**5.5.1 Introduction**

Working alone refers to circumstances where assistance is not readily available in event of an emergency. Working alone or in isolation can presents hazards to employees. Okanagan College has developed this safety program to protect employees from the risks of working alone where assistance is not readily available.

The Working Alone Safety Program entails identifying hazards, developing control measures, implementing safe work procedures and communication plans, and employee training. The goals of this program are to:

* Identify and asses existing and potential hazards that may arise where an employee is working alone or in isolation where help is not readily available;
* Make every reasonable effort to identify, document, and control hazards;
* Provide an effective means of communication between the employee and the workplace so help can be provided in an emergency;
* Ensure employees are adequately trained and educated to perform their jobs safely while working alone.

**5.5.2 Roles and Responsibilities**

###### **Health and Safety Department:**

The Health and Safety Department is responsible for the effective implementation and administration of the Working Alone Safety Program including ensuring:

* Safety assessments safety plans are completed for all working alone scenarios (assist with hazard identification, risk assessments, and development of control measures and safe work procedures as required);
* Employee training is adequately tracked and documented.
* The Working Alone Safety program is reviewed on an annual basis in consultation with the JOHS Committees.

###### **Managers and Supervisors:**

Managers and supervisors are responsible for:

* Ensure completion of safety assessments for employees working alone (in consultation with the Health and Safety Department and employees working alone)
	+ Hazard identification,
	+ Risk assessment,
	+ Control measures,
	+ Safe work procedures / communication plans
* Ensure all employees working alone have completed Working Alone Safety Plans as required;
* Ensure effective means of communication are available and a check-in procedure is documented in the Working Alone Safety Plan;
* Ensure employees have been oriented and adequately trained regarding their Working Alone Safety Plan;
* Ensure employees follow the conditions and procedures detailed in their Working Alone Safety Plans;

###### **Workers:**

* Obtain permission from their supervisor prior to working alone;
* Participate in the Working Alone Safety Assessment and development of Working Alone Safety Plan;
* Understand the requirements of the Working Alone Safety Program and follow all conditions and procedures detailed in their Working Alone Safety Plan;
* Maintain regular communication as detailed by their Working Alone Safety Plan;
* Report any new hazards or incidents to their supervisor or manager.

**Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committee:**

* Consult on the development of working alone procedures and participate in annual reviews of the Working Alone Safety Program.

**5.5.3 Working Alone Safety Plan Development**

**Working Alone Safety Assessment:**

The first step in developing a Working Alone Safety Plan is to conduct a safety assessment. A safety assessment must be completed prior to an employee working alone. Working alone safety assessments should be completed by workers and their supervisors with assistance from the Health and Safety Department as required. The Working Alone Safety Assessment entails:

* Identifying all existing and potential hazards that may arise in a working alone situation using the Hazard Assessment and Control Form;
* Performing a risk assessment of the identified hazards to determine if they are high, medium, or low risk;
* Identifying control measures to address each hazard. When not practical to fully eliminate hazards, the risk must be minimized to the lowest practical level using engineering and/or administrative controls;
* All control measures should be recorded on the Hazard Assessment and Control Form.
* Medium and high-risk activities require the completion of a Working Alone Safety Plan; low risk activities do not.

**Working Alone Prohibitions:**

The following activities are prohibited while working alone:

* Confined space entry;
* Excavations (trenches);
* Working from heights;
* Handling of hazardous materials;
* Working on electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts;
* Using any tools or equipment with the potential for causing critical injury.

**Working Alone Safety Plan:**

A Working Alone Safety Plan is required for medium and high-risk work. The Working Alone Safety Plan will include:

* Supervisor’s contact information;
* Names of all workers who will be performing the activities/tasks alone;
* Description of the activity/task including specific locations;
* Hazard assessment and controls;
* Check-in procedure;
* Emergency Response Plan.

It is recommended employees working alone use the OC Safe App as a means of checking in with their workplace. A check in schedule should be agreed upon between employees and their supervisors and detailed in their Working Alone Safety Plan. Employees performing low risk work are required to check in at minimum every 4-8 hours. Employees performing medium risk work are required to check in at minimum every 2-5 hours. Employees performing high risk work should check in at a frequency that corresponds to the hazards and emergency response plans.

**5.5.3 Overdue Worker Response Plan**

**Overdue Worker Response Plan:**

* When an employee working alone misses a check in using the OC Safe App, the App will notify the employee’s working alone contact person;
* The working alone contact person will attempt to contact the employee working alone by the means detailed in their working alone safety plan;
* If contact is not made within 15 minutes, the working alone contact person will arrange for face-to-face contact to be made with the overdue worker by notifying Security to dispatch a mobile unit to the employee’s location.
* The working alone contact person (supervisor) is responsible for providing information from the Working Alone Safety Plan to Security and emergency services as required.

**5.4.6 Education and Training**

All employees working alone will be properly oriented to the Working Along Safety Program. Employees working alone will also receive adequate education and training on the specific requirements and procedures of their Working Alone Safety Plan.

Working alone education and training will be tracked and documented by the Health and Safety Department.

**5.4.8 Working Alone Safety Program Review**

The Working Alone Safety Program will be reviewed by the Health and Safety Department, in consultation with the JOHS Committees, on an annual basis and immediately in response to significant changes in work or workplace conditions or other indications suggesting the need for re-evaluation, including:

* After injuries, illnesses, accidents, or near-misses involving working alone;
* After new hazard information becomes available;
* Before implementing new or revised safe work procedures involving working alone;
* In response to significant and credible complaints or concerns or other indications casting doubt on the adequacy of current Working Alone Safety Program training.