



Policy Number:	CS-1404-2017
Policy Title:	Working Alone Policy
Policy Owner:	Chief Human Resources Officer
Effective Date:	October 18, 2017

In light of Covid-19, please note the following changes to the Working Alone policy effective immediately and until further notice:

- 'Employee Access to Campus' protocol includes a detailed Hazard Risk Assessment Questionnaire to assist in assessing risk, including Working Alone.
- Supervisor/manager will complete a Formal Safety Plan
 - For all medium and high risk work situations as defined in the Working Alone Policy, the Safety Plan will be reviewed by Occupational Health and Safety prior to access approval and scheduling. Access applicants will be expected to follow prescribed protocol for Working Alone.
 - For all low risk work situations access applicants will be expected to follow the procedures outlined in the exiting Working Alone Policy.

1. Purpose

Mohawk College is committed to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for individuals required to work alone. This policy ensures the safety and well-being of individuals permitted/required to work alone is protected through regular communication methods and the development of 'Working Alone Safety Plans' as described in this policy and associated procedure.

2. Application and Scope

This policy applies to all students, employees, contractors and volunteers who may be required to work alone while on College property; off-campus at College related events and, during work-related travel. This policy does not apply to students completing unpaid work placements with third parties.

3. Definitions

"Manager" includes supervisors as defined in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA).

"Supervisor" refers to a person who has charge over a workplace or authority over a worker as defined by the OHSA.

"Worker" refers to a person who performs work or supplies services for monetary compensation and also to students (secondary school, college or university) who perform work or supply services for no monetary compensation under a program - approved work experience placement as defined in the OHSA. All employees, including paid students (e.g. CSEP), and students working in unpaid placements at Mohawk College, are workers under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

"Working alone" refers to working in situations where one is out of sight and hearing of others, when they do not expect a visit from another person and when assistance is not readily available in the event of a serious or critical injury, medical emergency, or victimization from workplace violence or criminal activity.

"Workplace Violence" refers to:

- a) The exercise of physical force in the workplace by a person against an employee that causes or could cause physical injury to the employee;
- b) An attempt to exercise physical force against an employee in the workplace, that could cause physical injury to the employee;
- c) A statement or behaviour that is reasonable for an employee to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the employee in a workplace that could cause physical injury.

4. Principles

- The College will, to the extent possible, coordinate work activities to avoid leaving or requiring individuals to work alone.
- Students, students completing unpaid work placements at the College, volunteers, and CSEP students are not permitted to work alone.
- Working alone is not permitted for tasks identified in section 6.0
- The College will ensure hazards are assessed prior to permitting individuals to work alone as per the procedure in Appendix A.
- The College will ensure that: a method for regular communication is established; controls are implemented for the hazards identified; and, that a 'Working Alone Safety Plan' is developed for individuals required to work alone as per the procedure in Appendix A.

5. Accountability and Compliance

5.1 Accountability Framework

This policy has been approved by the Senior Leadership Team.

5.2 Compliance

The Chief Human Resources Officer is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and revising this policy according to an established schedule or more frequently in response to feedback from the College Community.

6. Rules

Working alone is prohibited when working:

- in a confined space as defined by O. Regulation 632/05;
- on or near a live electrical installation, equipment, or conductor operating at a nominal voltage of 300 volts or more, with the exception of equipment testing and troubleshooting;
- on electrical transmission systems or outdoor distribution systems rated at more than 750 volts;
- in a trench;
- on a portable ladder that exceeds six metres in length and is not securely fastened, or when working with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic;
- on suspended scaffolds or when using fall arrest equipment;
- in an atmosphere that requires the use of supplied air respiratory equipment or self-contained breathing apparatus;
- in a place where there is a risk of drowning;
- where a vehicle, crane or similar equipment is operated near a live power line, and it is possible for any part of the vehicle, crane or similar equipment or its load to make contact with the live power line;
- where the operator of a vehicle, mobile equipment, crane or similar material handling equipment does not have full view of the intended path of travel of the vehicle, mobile equipment, crane or similar material handling equipment or its load;
- on welding operations where a fire watch is required for fire prevention; and
- any task as determined by the Manager's risk assessment that prohibits working alone.

7. Policy Revision Date

7.1 Revision Date

October 2020

7.2 Responsibility

The Human Resources Office is responsible for reviewing this policy every three years or earlier when required.

8. Attachments

Appendix A - Procedure for Risk Assessment and Working Alone Safety
Plan Attachment 1 - Working Alone Safety Plan

9. Specific Links

CS-1401-1979 Health and Safety Policy

CS-1402-2012 Violence Prevention and Protection Policy

Control Measures for Workplace Violence Risk Activities

Preventing and Responding to Workplace Violence - Safety Tips and Guidelines

Occupational Health and Safety Act

Appendix A

Working Alone Risk Assessment and Safety Plan Development Procedure

1. Definitions

"Buddy System" refers to the arrangement for another worker to work in close proximity to the individual or such that they can be seen or heard by another worker to allow monitoring each other's activities and safety.

"Critical Injury" is defined in Ontario Regulation 834 "Critical Injury" as an injury of serious nature that:

- places life in jeopardy;
- produces unconsciousness;
- results in substantial loss of blood;
- involves the fracture of a leg or arm but not a finger or toe;
- involves the amputation of a leg, arm, hand, or foot but not a finger or toe;
- consists of burns to a major portion of the body; or
- causes the loss of sight in an eye.

"Serious Injury" refers to an injury of serious nature that may not meet the definition or reporting requirements of a critical injury, but that requires emergency medical services and transportation to a medical facility (hospital).

Note: A serious injury includes a critical injury.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Managers

- Make all efforts to avoid or minimize the need to work alone.
- Review standard office/departmental safety protocols with all individuals (refer to section 3.2.2)
- Identify workers/individuals who are required to work alone.
- Conduct risk assessments for work tasks/activities, in consultation with the worker(s), to identify hazards and implement measures to eliminate or control those hazards, and determine whether working alone is permitted.
- Ensure a system is in place for establishing regular contact with the worker/individual
- working alone, at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed and initiate emergency response procedures as appropriate.
- Develop a Working Alone Safety Plan where required (Attachment 1).
- Review the Working Alone Safety Plan with affected worker(s)/individual(s) and ensure training is provided, including the use of any relevant alarm or communication systems.
- Review the Working Alone Safety Plan annually and update as required.

2.2 Employees

- Participate in the evaluation of the hazards associated with the working alone tasks.
- Follow the Working Alone Safety Plan developed by the Manager.
- Report any/all hazards and all incidents that occur while working alone to their Manager.
- Inform the Manager if there are any concerns regarding the safety plan, or, if changes in the workplace require a change in the safety plan.

2.3 Occupational Health and Safety

- Provide assistance and advice for the assessment and development of Working Alone Safety plans as necessary.
- Review and store working alone safety plans.

2.4 Security Services

- Provide assistance and advice for the assessment and development of Working Alone Safety Plans as necessary.
- Provide check-in service upon request by workers/individuals working alone.
- Provide emergency response to security threats or when summoned by duress alarms, phone or other methods of notification.
- Assess areas for duress alarm needs upon request or as required.

3. Procedure

Ontario does not have a regulation specific to "working alone" situations, although some high risk activities are prohibited (refer to Section 6 of the Policy). The interpretation of "working alone" can be broad and the associated risk of injury can range from low to high. Judgement is required when determining whether working alone is permitted and whether the development of a Working Alone Safety Plan is required.

Formal Working Alone Safety Plans are not required for low risk activities, such as employees performing office/computer work alone after the office has closed and everyone has left for the day, or when working in an office outside of normal business hours. In these situations, standard personal safety/security/office measures must be communicated to, and followed by affected individuals (refer to section 3.2.2). However, an individual performing maintenance or repair activities in a remote area may be considered to be "working alone" and, if permitted by the manager's assessment, would require a working alone safety plan.

Managers are responsible for identifying individuals who work alone and for conducting risk assessments, in consultation with affected individuals, to identify hazards, implement control measures to address identified hazards, and, develop Working Alone Safety Plans (refer to Attachment 1), if required.

Notes:

- The "buddy system" is recommended to avoid working alone situations as much as possible.
- "Normal" or "typical" business hours depend on the building location/campus and the particular work area [e.g. Office, gym, service area, teaching, etc....]. These may need to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Manager.

3.1 Conduct a Risk Assessment

The risk assessment determines whether the risk associated with the work to be performed alone is low, medium or high (Prohibited). The risk assessment must consider:

- The need to work alone and the nature of the work location or environment.
- Whether the work to be performed alone is considered high risk (refer to section 6.0) and is therefore prohibited.
- Identification of the hazards associated with the work performed, including, foreseeable consequences and worst-case scenarios of an emergency that may arise, including:
 - Physical/medical injury by machinery/equipment (potential to be seriously or critically injured)
 - Physical/medical injury by hazardous chemical use/exposure (potential to be overcome/incapacitated or seriously injured)
 - Medical emergency (e.g. heart attack, stroke, seizure)
 - Physical assault/attack
 - Robbery
- Physical or medical limitations/conditions of affected individual(s).

3.1.1 Working Alone Risk Levels

Low, medium and high risk activity levels are outlined below and may be used as a guide to assist with the Manager's risk assessment and the development of the Working Alone Safety Plan, if required.

Low Risk Activities

Low risk hazards exist and there is a low risk of injury or emergency situation associated with the work activity and/or environment. Working alone is permitted without the need for a formal Working Alone Safety Plan. Standard safety/security/office measures (refer to section 3.2.2) are adequate and must be reviewed with individuals.

Examples include: working alone during normal business hours performing tasks such as general office work, teaching, customer service functions, travelling of site to attend conferences or visit client sites and, office work outside normal business hours.

Medium Risk Activities

Medium risk hazard(s) exist and there is a higher risk of injury or emergency situation associated with the work activity and/or environment. Working alone is permitted, and a Working Alone Safety Plan is required.

Examples include: Working alone in remote or isolated areas performing activities/tasks such as: Maintenance work, working in extreme temperatures, handling cash/valuables, customer service/dealing with public; handling large volumes of chemicals (excluding fast acting, acute toxicity chemicals).

High Risk Activities (Prohibited)

Working alone is not permitted for high risk activities identified under Section 6 of this Policy. Tasks that have potential for serious/critical injury and/or emergency situations associated with the work activity and/or environment should be assessed as high risk.

Examples include: Meeting with potentially violent individuals or those known to have a history of violence; performing maintenance, repair or use of machines, equipment, hazardous chemicals or processes that could cause a serious or critical injury.

3.2 Identify Hazard Controls and Communication Measures

Managers must identify measures to eliminate or control the identified hazards and establish a method for regular communication/contact for checking on the safety and well-being of individual(s) working alone. Hazard controls must be identified in the Working Alone Safety Plan, and includes:

- Identifying any specific activities/tasks that are prohibited from being performed while working alone.
- Ensuring a system is in place for regular contact with the person working alone, at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed (i.e. email, text message, landline telephone, cell phone, two-way radio, check-in procedure, periodic contact/checks etc.).
- Standard personal safety, security and/or office measures to be implemented, as applicable to the situation.
- The procedure that will be followed to check on the worker's well-being and provide assistance in the event the individual does not reply or check-in as per the established schedule. This would require continued efforts to contact the individual and may involve contacting Security and/or Police as appropriate.
- How emergency assistance can be obtained and provided in the event of an injury/illness or incident occurring while working alone.
- Ensuring individuals know where applicable safety or emergency equipment is located (e.g. duress alarms; fire alarm pull stations, fire extinguishers, eye wash station, emergency shower, (Material) Safety Data Sheets, personal protective equipment).

3.2.1 Maintain Regular Contact

Maintain regular contact with the person working alone, at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed, with a designated person. Regular contact can be established using email, text messaging, telephone, cell phone, two-way radio, check-in procedures or period contact/checks.

Check-in Procedure

Maintain regular contact with a designated individual to communicate that you are safe. The checking procedure must require you to take some predetermined action to confirm you are safe and do not need help. Includes signing-in with Security, using card access and contact with manager, another employee/co-worker or Security Services.

Periodic Contact/Checks

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

3.2.2 Standard Personal Safety/Security/Office Measures

The following measures are recommended at all times as applicable to the situation:

- Keep/lock valuables out of sight;
- Report suspicious behaviour/individuals to Security Services staff;
- Be aware of your surroundings (e.g. people, exits/fire exits, escape routes, fire alarm pull stations, phone/cell-phone, duress alarm);
- Contact Walk Smart (or Security Services) to be escorted to your car or bus stop;
- Download the Mohawk Safety App to your mobile phone;
- Restrict access to offices/areas to authorized persons only;
- Lock office doors at the end of the business day;
- Avoid staying alone in the office at the end of the day if possible;
- Advise others or Security Services of your location when working alone;
- Check-in with Security whenever you are working alone after hours;
- If you work alone after hours, you should:
 - Relocate or park your vehicle in a well-lit area, as close to the building as possible.
 - Advise Security and any other workers of your location and schedule.
 - Request an escort to your vehicle if necessary.
- Make area visible to other workers and public as much as possible. Keep sight lines unobstructed;
- Post emergency phone numbers in area and/or on phones [e.g. 55; 88, 911) to summon assistance;
- Establish an internal code word(s) or other signal to indicate help is needed; and/or

- Inform/notify employees about the risk of violence related to specific situations or individuals, including possible triggers for violence.

If you feel threatened, trust your instincts and summon immediate assistance by contacting Security Services (24 hrs) using the methods below as applicable to your location:

- Ext. 55 from any college phone
- Ext. 88 from any university phone at IAHS - you will be connected with McMaster Security
- Duress alarms, if equipped
- Through the use of any of the following as applicable to the specific location:
 - Emergency intercoms in hallways
 - Blue light phones in parking lots or
 - Emergency buttons on Bell payphones or
 - Hallway or classroom phones
- Mohawk Safety App (download from internet)

If it is an emergency, always call 911 for the Police.

3.2.3 Safety Needs Assessment

Contact Security Services to conduct a needs assessment for the following:

- card access control to the area;
- camera for video surveillance;
- motion sensors or alarms;
- duress alarms;
- wall or ceiling mounted mirrors for hard-to-see areas; and
- Provide appropriate means of communication (telephone, cell phone, two-way radio, duress alarm).

3.2.4 Other Control Measures for Working Alone

- Provide personal protective equipment (e.g. safety glasses/shields, gloves, clothing, safety footwear)
- Ensure workers are trained to perform the work safely.

3.3 Develop the Working Alone Safety Plan

After completing the risk assessment, the Manager will determine if the development of a Working Alone Safety Plan is required. If so, Managers must complete Working Alone Safety Plan Form (Attachment 1) and review it with affected workers /individuals. Reviewing the plan with the affected workers /individuals will help to ensure they understand how to work safely and how to obtain assistance in the event of an emergency when working alone. The Occupational Health and Safety Consultant and Security Services will provide guidance upon request.



**Attachment 1
Working Alone Safety Plan**

Campus/Department: _____

Manager: _____ Date Prepared: _____

I have reviewed and assessed the risk activities and determined working alone is permitted as described in this working alone safety plan. Y/N

Individual(s) covered by this Plan

Worksite location(s) where work will be performed alone and description of how it is isolated

Description of Work Activity/Tasks Performed While Working Alone

Dates/Times/Hours Working Alone is required/permitted

Identify the hazards with the work/tasks performed or environmental conditions that may arise and describe.

Injury from Equipment or Chemicals	Physical Assault	Medical Emergency	Robbery
Other _____			
Describe the nature of the hazard(s) and estimated risk (L/M/H):			

Identify any limitations or restrictions of any specific work/tasks while working alone.
(e.g. list specific equipment or chemicals not to be used)

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Identify Control Measures to Reduce/Eliminate/Control Hazards identified

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Identify method(s) of communication that will be used to and describe how the worker can obtain emergency assistance if required in the event of an accident or incident. Include specific contact details.

Telephone	Cell Phone/Text Messaging	Two-Way Radio	Email	Panic Alarm
Other _____				
To summon emergency assistance: _____				

Frequency for regular communication with designated individual to ensure you are safe and do not need help.

<p>Contact should be made at predetermined intervals or times and may be made in person, by telephone/cell phone/text, email or any other effective means, at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards or the work performed. Identify how contact will be made (e.g. in-person check or using technology), by whom and the contact frequency or specific times. Note: Emergency response may be initiated if failure to make contact as per the frequency below.</p> <p>Contact will be made using: _____</p> <p>Name of person to initiate contact: _____</p> <p>Contact Frequency: 1 hr 2 hr 3hr 4hr Other _____</p> <p>Times: _____</p>
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Identify who will be responsible and what they will do if contact is not maintained as per the above frequency/schedule, to ensure the safety and well-being of the individual(s) working alone.

Designated individual will check or respond immediately: Name _____ Describe _____ Security will be contacted to respond immediately: Y/N Police will be contacted (911): Y/N Other:

The location and use of applicable safety resources has been reviewed with the employee?
(e.g. location of duress alarms, telephone, emergency intercoms, Security Blue Lights, fire alarm pull station(s), fire extinguishers, eyewash stations/emergency showers, how to obtain first aid or emergency response). **Y/N**

Note: The Manager must review this plan with their employees and ensure training has been provided prior to permitting working alone. This plan should be reviewed annually and updated as required.

- c. Department File
Employee(s)
Occupational Health and Safety Office (F102)