

Working Alone Safety Guidelines

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PURPOSE	
<p>Working alone can increase the risk of injury and delay the response of emergency services should an incident occur, and as such should be eliminated whenever possible. However, the University acknowledges that there will be circumstances when working alone is required to support ongoing research and operational activities.</p> <p>Some workplace activities are governed by laws and regulations which may prohibit working alone (i.e. confined space entry) and are expressly forbidden both on and off campus. However, for other activities, Supervisors can conduct a risk assessment to determine the appropriateness of the activity performed by individuals when alone.</p> <p>While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when other circumstances are present. Whether a situation presents a low, medium, or high risk will depend on the location, type of work, interaction with the public, or the consequences of an emergency, incident, injury, etc. This wide variety of circumstances makes it important to assess each situation individually.</p>	
OBJECTIVES	
<p>This program is designed to ensure the safety and well-being of workers working alone in various settings within the various operations of Trent University, including academia and research.</p>	
SCOPE	
<p>This guideline applies to all faculty, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors performing work or participating in university sanctioned activities on and off campus, including field research activities, under the direction of an authorized member of the university community.</p> <p>This guideline and the accompanying Risk Assessment and Safety Plan should be used where an activity has the potential to result in exposure to dangerous conditions, hazardous materials or equipment, or to environments that pose a risk of injury or illness due to violence or hazardous conditions.</p>	
RELATED DOCUMENTATION	
<p>Trent University Working Alone Safety Plan</p> <p>Trent University Working Alone Risk Assessment</p>	
DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS	
Confined Space	A fully or partially enclosed space, that is not designed and constructed for continuous human occupancy, and in which atmospheric hazards may occur

	because of its construction, location, or contents or because of work that is done in it.
High Risk Activities	Work that places a worker at an increased risk of physical or psychological harm, uses potentially dangerous machinery, or exposes a worker to a hazardous location or materials.
Low Risk Activities	Activities that have a low probability of an accident and would not result in serious or critical injury.
Moderate Risk Activities	Activities which result in a hazardous condition which may cause infrequent accidents, and which may cause serious or minor injuries but not critical injuries or death.
Principal Investigator (PI)	The PI is a faculty member or research scientist appointed by Trent University to conduct research. The PI has overall responsibility for safety and compliance in their laboratory, including any associated field research.
Risk Assessment	A quantitative measure of the probability of an accident due to a hazardous condition occurring and the severity of an injury occurring due to the hazardous condition.
Supervisor	A person who has charge of a workplace or authority over a worker or student.
Student	A person enrolled in one or more courses at Trent University.
Worker	Means any of the following, but does not include an inmate of a correctional institution or like institution or facility who participates inside the institution or facility in a work project or rehabilitation program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person who performs work or supplies services for monetary compensation. • A secondary school student who performs work or supplies services for no monetary compensation under a work experience program authorized by the school board that operates the school in which the student is enrolled. • A person who performs work or supplies services for no monetary compensation under a program approved by a college of applied arts and technology, university, private career college or other post-secondary institution.
Working Alone	Working by oneself such that assistance is not readily available should an injury, illness or emergency arise. Being alone is interpreted as being out of visual or verbal contact, and when contact cannot be expected from another person for more than an hour. It includes working in physical isolation, e.g. as the sole occupant of a building, a laboratory, or at a field work site, where no other person is in the vicinity (i.e. within limited range or earshot). It can occur during normal working hours as well as in the evening, overnight, or during weekends.

Workplace	Means any land, premises, location or thing at, upon, in or near which a worker works, i.e. where the academic and administrative activities of Trent University take place.
ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES	
<p>Senior Management is responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that faculty, staff, volunteers, and students are aware of, and have been trained on the requirements for working alone; Ensuring that risk assessments have been conducted and appropriate controls put into place; and Establishing general rules for working alone at the university. <p>Faculty and Supervisors are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying situations where workers and students, including themselves, are working alone and conducting risk assessments accordingly; Developing appropriate controls to mitigate risk at the individual and/or project level; and Ensuring that all individuals receive training and instruction in the details of department / unit / lab specific working alone safe work practices. <p>Workers are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtaining supervisor approval before working alone; Participating in risk assessment and development of controls related to working alone; Following the protocols put into place and adhering to safe work practices; and Advising of any changes in conditions, circumstances or deficiencies in protocols or safe work practices. 	
PROCEDURE	
<p>Working alone, especially outside of standard building hours, should be avoided whenever possible.</p> <p>Working alone under High-Risk conditions (see table below) is expressly forbidden.</p> <p>Workers should not be working alone (as defined above within these guidelines) without the knowledge of their supervisor.</p> <p>For circumstances where working alone cannot be avoided or is required to support ongoing research and operational activities, Supervisors will conduct a risk assessment using the Working Alone Risk Assessment (fillable PDF) to identify the hazards involved and safety protocols which should be in place.</p> <p>Approval for working alone under Moderate Risk conditions, as well as check-in procedures (if necessary) and safety planning should be documented by the Supervisors (including Principal Investigators) using the Working Alone Safety Plan document.</p> <p>Departments, labs, and research teams should develop safe work practices for working alone under Low and Moderate Risk conditions. Documentation should include materials, equipment and processes</p>	

that may and may not be used while working alone, and security measures to protect against theft, property damage or personal injury due to an intruder. All individuals who are approved to work alone under Low Risk and Moderate Risk conditions must be trained on the safe work practices.

Approval of working alone must consider:

- Tasks and hazards involved in the work;
- Consequences resulting from a worst-case scenario;
- The possibility of an incident or injury that would prevent an individual from calling for help;
- The individual's training and experience level;
- The time the work is to be conducted; and
- Access to emergency assistance.

WORKING ALONE EXAMPLE CONDITIONS AND RISKS

Example Conditions	Level of Risk	Outcome
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confined space entry • Electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts • Trenches • Portable ladder that exceeds 6 metres in length and is not securely fastened • Use of fall arrest equipment (without travel restraint) or scaffolds • Machines and power tools that may cause critical injury (e.g. lathe, table saw, chain saw) • Work with acutely toxic material (e.g. cyanides, fumigants, hydrofluoric acid) as described in Safety Data Sheet (SDS) • Pyrophoric chemicals • Risk Group 3 Biohazard labs • Use of supplied air or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) • Risk of drowning • Use of a vehicle, boom or similar equipment near live power lines where it is possible for any part of the equipment or its load to make contact with the live power line • Work with Radioactive substances • Open flame associated with flammable solvents • Hot work where a fire watch is required • Other tasks which based on hazard analysis is deemed to require more than one person for safety reasons 	High	Working alone is prohibited at Trent University.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large volumes of hazardous chemicals • X-rays • Radioactive materials (above exempt quantities) • Exposed, energized electrical systems • Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs • Class 3B and 4 lasers • Work with materials acutely hazardous to health • Work with human subjects • Extreme temperature environments • Handling of cash • Dealing directly with the public • Work in isolated areas (field work) • Work on ice • Liquid Nitrogen dispensing without prior training and approval 	Moderate Risk	<p>Working Alone Risk Assessment must be conducted. Depending on the results, working alone may or may not be allowed.</p> <p>Departments, labs, and research teams should develop safe work practices, including a Working Alone Safety Plan, for working alone. Documentation should include materials, equipment and processes that may and may not be used while working alone, and security measures to protect against theft, property damage or personal injury due to an intruder. All individuals who are approved to work alone must be trained on the safe work practices.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Custodial work • Building maintenance with low risk • Laboratory work with minimal risk (analytical equipment, monitoring equipment or process, work not involving hazardous materials) • Routine office work or study 	Low Risk	<p>May work alone, however minimal precautions are required, which may include periodic check-ins with Supervisor or other Responsible Persons, access to a phone, and security measures to protect against theft, property damage or personal injury due to intruder.</p>
REPORTING INCIDENTS AND NEAR-MISSES		
All accidents, near-misses, or situations that deviate from these guidelines should be reported to the supervisor or PI, who will investigate and make necessary adjustments to enhance safety.		

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

All workers who work alone under Medium Risk conditions and their supervisors are required to read the Working Alone Safety Guidelines and collaboratively develop a Working Alone Safety Plan.

If workers are directed to work alone under Medium Risk conditions and they do not feel comfortable with the work or the safe work practices put in place, they are encouraged to speak with their Supervisor or PI about their concerns, or to a member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee if they still do not feel comfortable after speaking with their supervisor or PI.

The worker, the supervisor and the designated Check-In person must be trained and familiar with the work / department / lab specific process for Check-In, where the option to have a designated Check-In person is chosen when developing a Working Alone Safety Plan.