

WORKING ALONE

Background

Greater St. Albert Catholic Schools is committed to providing a Christ-centered, safe, caring, and healthy working environment for its employees. For this reason, the Division recognizes that safe working procedures and conditions, accident prevention, and the preservation of health are high priorities. Part 28 of the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Code establishes minimal requirements for employers and employees to follow if employees work alone. This procedure endeavors to enhance this standard based upon the Division's desire to optimize the safety of all employees. To achieve this standard, the Division seeks to minimize circumstances where employees are required to work alone, establish on-going controls for high-risk activity, and establish responsibilities for those employees and site supervisors who work alone, are required to work alone at a work site, and are required to travel alone to a site.

Definitions

Confined or Restricted Space:

This is an enclosed or partially enclosed space that is not designed or intended for continuous human occupancy (i.e. crawlspace, air handling unit, serviced tunnel, etc.).

Working Alone:

The term refers to work conducted alone at a worksite (with no one else present) or in areas of a building that are isolated from view or hearing distance (i.e. rooftop, vehicle, boiler room, separate wing of a large building, only worker in a building, etc.) and where assistance is not readily available in the event of an emergency. Working alone also refers to employees working out of their homes as approved or directed by their employer.

Guidelines

1. The Board of Trustees through the Superintendent (or designate) is responsible for the safety of employees as outlined in the *Education Act, Section 33 (1) (d)* and the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code (Part 28) for a Safe Workplace.
2. All employees have a shared responsibility in furthering their safety when working alone, and promoting employee well-being and due-diligence to the safety of colleagues who will be working alone.
3. Any location where division business is expected to be performed is considered to be a division work site.

4. The building site supervisor (as defined in procedure item 1) will ensure that employees have an understanding of the conditions for which an employee is considered to be working alone.
5. The building site supervisor (as defined in procedure item 1) will ensure that employees are informed of responsibilities associated with working alone.
6. Guiding principles for sustaining optimal safety where employers work alone will include:
 - 6.1. Site supervisor and employee commitment to the health and safety of fellow employees;
 - 6.2. Assessing the hazards of a workplace;
 - 6.3. Taking corrective actions or measures to prevent or minimize hazards or incidents from occurring;
 - 6.4. Training and educating staff so they can perform their jobs effectively;
 - 6.5. Investigating an incident that has been reported by employees and following through with measures that will prevent the incident from occurring again;
 - 6.6. Evaluating safety measures on a regular basis to ensure that these measures work, especially, as new changes in business operations arise.

Procedures

1. Minimizing Working Alone Circumstances
 - 1.1. Principals, vice-principals, central office administrators, office managers, maintenance supervisors, lessees, and contractors (known collectively as “site supervisors”) shall first consider strategies to eliminate situations where any person operating in an employment capacity, including themselves, works alone. This includes establishing local procedures that address acceptable hours of work, promote a buddy system, and identify what types of tasks can be safely performed alone via a hazard assessment. All site supervisors previously mentioned will annually conduct a review of the guidelines and guiding principles associated as they would apply to the work or employees.
2. Controls Regarding High Risk Activity
 - 2.1. Employees, whether Division employed, or employed by Contractors or Lessees (known collectively as “employees”) and site supervisors shall not work alone when conducting tasks that elevate a risk of injury and / or limit accessibility to safety and assistance unless acceptable controls are in place. This includes establishing a system of visible and / or audible contact with a person that can readily provide assistance in the event of an emergency. Higher risk tasks include working with powered equipment, or potentially aggressive students, and community members.

- 2.2. Control strategies include an employee, at specified intervals, scheduling check-ins with other staff, and reporting to a designated person during or upon the completion of a task.
- 2.3. Employees and site supervisors shall not work alone when working at heights above 10 feet or when working inside a confined or restricted space.

3. Controls for Working Alone by Choice

- 3.1. When an employee chooses to work alone outside of regular hours of employment, he / she will be required to make known to the site supervisor the times and dates of intent to work alone through a daily sign up or deployment roster and complete an annual acknowledgment of compliance with the Appendix A form that verifies the employee's compliance with Division expectations. Employees who choose to work alone will be expected to plan for their safety by providing evidence when requested from a site supervisor, that they are compliant with the expectations of the protocol.
- 3.2. Site Supervisors who work alone by choice, are required to meet all of the expectations outlined in this procedure item 4 and will be expected to designate a subordinate within their work unit who will retain a copy of the acknowledgement of compliance with the Division Protocol for Employees Choosing to Work Alone (Appendix A). Site Supervisors who choose to work alone will be expected to plan for their safety by providing evidence when requested from a subordinate that they are compliant with the expectations of the protocol.
- 3.3. Should employees or site supervisors who work alone demonstrate that they have not followed the measures previously outlined, they may have their working alone privileges restricted or revoked.

4. Controls for Working Alone by Requirement

- 4.1. When an employee is required to work alone, the site supervisor in collaboration with the employee shall:
 - 4.1.1. Review with the individual who will be working alone, any existing safety hazards according to circumstance by doing a hazard assessment, as per normal Occupational Health and Safety Procedures (refer to [OHS School kit](#), [OHS Schoolkit - Appendices](#) and [Government of Alberta "Working Alone Safely: A Guide for Employers and Employees"\(September, 2000\)"](#) documents) and [eCompliance Hazard Assessment database](#));
 - 4.1.2. Ensure that all hazards have been identified that pertain to the specific situation and ensure that the individual follows the appropriate procedures;
 - 4.1.3. Implement safety measures to control or eliminate the hazards identified;

- 4.1.4. Ensure employees are trained and educated so they can perform a working alone task safely;
- 4.1.5. Establish in writing, an effective plan and means of communication between the employee and persons capable of responding to his / her need;
- 4.1.6. Ensure regular contact with the employee at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the worker's work;
- 4.1.7. *Provide for an effective communication to be in place that consists of radio communication, landline or cellular telephone communication, or some other effective means of electronic communication that includes regular contact by the site supervisor at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the employee's work.

****Despite this expectation, if effective electronic communication is not practicable at the work site, the site supervisor must ensure that he / she visits the individual or the individual contacts the supervisor at intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazard associated with the individual's work.***

- 4.2. Site supervisors required to work alone by a person of higher rank / designation within the division will assure that the previous controls are in place for their work and will seek approval from their direct report (the person of higher rank / designation) that these controls will bring optimal safety to the working alone requirement.
- 4.3. Employees or site supervisors who believe that a required working alone assignment and its associated hazard assessment is insufficient in appropriately providing for their health and safety may protest this assignment to their immediate supervisor, or to higher levels of authority, up to and including the superintendent.
- 4.4. Where the employee is required to work out of his/her home, requirements under 4.1.1 - 4.3 may be modified but still sustain the intent of expectations under these sections. Specifically, this means that the employee will assure that the home is sustained as a productive workplace environment that is free from hazards to working safely.

5. Controls for Travelling Alone for Work

All site supervisors and employees travelling alone for work purposes are advised to:

- 5.1 Check road reports and the weather forecast prior to travelling;
- 5.2 Postpone travel if road conditions are impassable as explained in AP 132 – Inclement Weather;
- 5.3 Develop a travel plan that includes rest breaks, check-ins and tracking procedures and emergency contact information;

- 5.4 Ensure the vehicle is in good operating condition and equipped with a first aid kit and emergency supplies prior to travelling;
- 5.5 Ensure a cellphone is available for work.

References: *Education Act*, Section 33 (1) (d); 222 (4), (5)
Occupational Health and Safety Act - Part 2; Part 28: Section 393 – Code 182/2019, January 31, 2020.
Occupational Health and Safety Schoolkit (Work Safe, Alberta);
Occupational Health and Safety Schoolkit - Appendices (Work Safe, Alberta);
Government of Alberta: “Working Alone Safely: A Guide for Employers and Employees”(September, 2000);
AP 412 - Occupational Health and Safety;
AP 132 - Inclement Weather.

Implemented: May 31, 2017
Revised: March 18, 2020

WORKING ALONE: PROTOCOL

Individuals who choose to or who are directed to work alone shall follow the general working alone safety procedures listed in this administrative procedure and take any additional measures associated with their job, shift, or location. Employees working alone shall:

1. Participate in work site hazard assessments and the implementation of procedures to eliminate or control the hazards of working alone when at a work site or working from home;
2. Be aware of personal safety issues that may prevail, such as accident, injury, or intrusion by outsiders;
3. Ensure doors are secured upon entering the facility/home;
4. Enter their name, location and time of entry on the sign-in form located near the building alarm panel or entrance if you are at a work site;
5. Seek out another employee/emergency contact person in the facility/home to make them aware that you are on-site and checked upon when leaving;
6. Be aware of the surroundings at all times especially when entering or exiting a facility/home by visually checking for any potential safety concerns;
7. Notify an emergency contact person (listed below) such as a family member or a friend of their location, provide a phone number where they can be contacted on the premises (cell phone or land line) and the time that they can be expected to leave and arrive home;

Emergency Contact Name	Emergency Contact Phone #
------------------------	---------------------------

8. Carry a cell phone so that the employee/emergency contact person can contact emergency services if needed; Cell # _____
9. Upon exiting the facility/home, ensure that the immediate vicinity of the exit is safe and ensure that the doors are secured;
10. In the event of an intruder incident, the employee should not confront the intruder, but proceed to the nearest room, secure the door, and call 911;
11. If the employee feels that his / her safety is in immediate danger, *activate the nearest fire alarm, if at a work site.

**This is an extreme measure and should only be taken if immediate assistance is required, the employee is in severe distress, and they believe assistance from an emergency contact cannot be delayed, or calling 911 is not possible.*

Date(s) and time(s) intended to work alone: _____

I am aware of, and will comply with the above recommendations whenever working alone by choice or due to safety requirements:

Employee's Name (printed)	Employee's Signature
Supervisor's Name (printed)	Supervisor's Signature