



## POLICIES and PROCEDURES

Responsible Unit:	Human Resources
Policy Number	W-2
Date Last Updated	19 November 2012
Approving Sector Head	Vice-President, Finance & Administration and CFO
Policy	<b>Working Alone or in Isolation</b>

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### **Policy Statement:**

Acadia University is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all members of the University community.

This *Working Alone or in Isolation Policy* requires that risks be identified and minimized in situations when University employees, students and/or volunteers are working alone or in isolation. Risk Assessments must be done and Safety Plans must be in place to ensure that all reasonable measures are applied to protect the safety of persons who are working alone or in isolation.

### **Purpose:**

This *Working Alone or in Isolation Policy* is intended to clarify expectations and provide a mandatory process to facilitate safety when persons are working alone or in isolation. Prevention of injury/illness and other harm is always the primary goal. Secondly, provision must be made for persons who work alone to access emergency response/assistance if they experience injury/illness or if other harm occurs.

This policy is intended to meet the legal obligations described in the *Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Act*.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies where employees (faculty and staff), students and/or volunteers work alone or in isolation, both on campus and off campus (e.g. in a field research capacity).

## Definitions:

**Buddy System:** A system of organizing work so that the worker can be seen or heard by another worker who is working in close proximity to his/her work area.

**Communication:** A Working Alone or in Isolation Safety Plan may include the following to ensure the most practical and effective means of communication:

- Portable or cellular telephone,
- Portable radio,
- E-mail, instant message or text message,
- Personal alarm,
- Social media formats,
- Buddy system,
- Check-in system and requirement for updating an individual's status while working alone, or
- Any other method that may be considered effective in the specific department's safe operations.

**Competent person** means a person who is:

- (i) qualified because of that person's knowledge, training and experience to do the assigned work in a manner that will ensure the health and safety of every person in the workplace, and
- (ii) knowledgeable about the provisions of the NS OH&S Act and regulations that apply to the assigned work, and about potential or actual danger to health or safety associated with the assigned work.

**Employee** means a person who is compensated through Acadia University's payroll system.

**Normal working hours** means the hours of the Acadia University when there are typically people available to help in the case of an incident, as outlined in the respective collective agreements or agreed upon working arrangements. However, some areas/tasks have normal work hours that do not fall within this range. In cases where people would not typically be available to help, area/task specific Working Alone Procedures should be formulated and the department should stipulate what they consider normal work hours to be.

**Resources:** Fire alarm pull station, fire extinguisher, eye wash station, emergency shower, material safety data sheet (MSDS), first aid kit, first aiders, small chemical spill cleanup kit, telephone (including land line, cellular, pay phone), etc.

**Hazard:** A condition or practice with a potential to cause harm, including injury/illness, damage to equipment, materials or the environment, or a combination of these.

**Student** means a person who is enrolled at Acadia University and who is engaged in a course of studies.

**Supervisor** means a person authorized by the University to oversee and/or direct the work of others, including a dean, director, department head, manager, faculty member, research supervisor, principal investigator and any other person in a position of authority.

**Volunteer:** An individual who provides service to the University without receiving compensation is considered a volunteer. See HR *Volunteers* Policy for criteria that have been established to further define volunteers.

**Working alone or in isolation** means to perform an employment-related, study, or university-sanctioned volunteer activity in circumstances where appropriate assistance would not be readily available to the worker if they experience injury/illness or if other harm occurs. Working alone or in isolation may occur on campus and off campus, including locations such as laboratories, offices, vehicles and fieldwork locations.

### Risk Categories:

Prior to performing work alone or in isolation, a Working Alone or in Isolation Risk Assessment/Safety Plan (Appendix B) shall be completed by the supervisor, in consultation with the person who will be performing the activity. For the purposes of risk assessment, activities are organized in three categories -- 1, 2 and 3 -- ranked from highest risk to lowest risk:

- I. **Category 1 (high risk) Activities** - must not be performed alone or in isolation.
- II. **Category 2 (medium risk) Activities** - may be performed alone or in isolation when adequate controls are in place. Category 2 activities involve exposure to hazards that are generally more controllable and, in the event of an occurrence, would likely result in minor - moderate harm. Although the risk associated with Category 2 activities is lower than with Category 1 activities, adequate controls (i.e. preventive measures, resources and provision for communication) must be in place for Category 2 activities to be performed alone or in isolation.
- III. **Category 3 (low risk) Activities** - may be performed alone or in isolation, during normal working hours, with no special controls. Category 3 activities involve exposure to few hazards and the risks of work-related injury/illness or other harm are low. Outside of normal working hours, it is advisable to use a departmental register/log book or other means of tracking location.

### **Category 1 (high risk) Activities**

No person may work alone where there is exposure to Category 1 (high-risk) activities. Examples include:

- Work with or near exposed electrical conductors (electrical work requires extensive controls detailed in the NS Occupational Safety General Regulations);
- Work with a class 3 or 4 laser;
- Work in confined spaces (working alone in confined spaces is prohibited by the NS Occupational Safety General Regulations);
- Handling an acutely toxic, highly corrosive, cryogenic or other material where exposure could impair the worker's ability to call for assistance;
- Handling a radioactive isotope;
- Work where use of supplied air respiratory equipment is required;
- Work where there is risk of drowning;
- Work with material under high pressure;
- Work with an open flame and/or extreme temperatures;
- Work from heights where the use of a personal fall arrest system is required;
- Work from a power operated elevating work platform (e.g. scissor lift, boom lift);
- Work from a ladder above the sixth step/rung;
- Performing "hot work" where a fire watch is required;
- Work where there is a potential "significant" risk of violence as determined by the Acadia University Workplace Violence Risk Assessment;

- Use of a vehicle, crane, tractor, loader or other power operated mobile equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel;
- Use of machine tools and equipment (e.g. milling machines, lathes, table saws, etc.) capable of inflicting serious injury;
- Other work involving a high risk of harm.

Note: Undergraduate students must be provided with direct (physically present, or within an immediate distance), competent supervision when performing Category 1 activities.

### Category 2 (medium risk) Activities

Category 2 (medium risk) activities may be performed alone or in isolation when adequate controls are in place. Examples include:

- Use of well-guarded equipment;
- Visiting external employers premises or doing fieldwork;
- Laboratory work with minimal risk (e.g. recording data, operating an instrument, counting plates, monitoring an experiment or process);
- Working at the Box Office, Library Access Desk, Technology Services Support Desk and other service counters;
- One-on-one counseling.

### Category 3 (low risk) Activities

Category 3 (low risk) activities may be performed alone or in isolation, during normal working hours, with no specialized controls. Examples include:

- Reading, studying, writing;
- Use of computers;
- Marking assignments/papers;
- Conducting meetings and interviews where there are more than two persons present and there is a low risk of violence.

### Responsibilities:

The responsibility for maintaining a safe and healthy workplace is shared by everyone who has some degree of control in the situation.

### Employee/student/volunteer Responsibilities

1. Participate, with the supervisor, in completing the Working Alone or in Isolation Risk Assessment/Safety Plan (Appendix B);
2. Follow safe work procedures and methods;
3. Take appropriate steps to advise the supervisor if risks increase.

### Supervisor Responsibilities

1. Anticipate and recognize all activities, within their area of control, where persons work alone or in isolation.
2. Not permit persons to perform Category 1 (high risk) activities when working alone or in isolation.

3. Complete an Acadia University Working Alone or in Isolation Risk Assessment/Safety Plan (Appendix B). For recurrent work where the activities and the circumstances/conditions remain relatively constant, one risk assessment/safety plan is adequate for multiple occasions.
4. For Category 2 (medium risk) activities, ensure that adequate controls (i.e. preventive measures, resources and provision for communication) are in place.
5. Ensure that completed Working Alone or in Isolation Risk Assessment/Safety Plan documents are kept at the workplace closest to where the work is performed and, where practical, ensure that they are accessible to the affected persons.

**Administration/management Responsibilities**

Ensure that supervisors within their areas of responsibility are familiar with and apply this policy.

## **Appendix A**

### **WORKING ALONE PROCEDURES**

From Acadia University Lab and Shop Safety Program

#### **Working Alone**

Some laboratory and shop procedures require long hours and it is often not possible to work a “9 to 5” schedule. Working alone, however, can be dangerous. Without someone around and able to help, an occurrence that would ordinarily be fairly minor could be very serious. If you must work alone:

- Do so only with your supervisor’s permission.
- Assess the hazards. Only work alone if the nature of that work makes an operation relatively safe (e.g. recording data, operating an instrument, counting plates). Such tasks typically involve routine procedures that experience has shown to be of low risk. Even with lower-risk tasks, ensure that your presence in the laboratory or shop, and your expected time of work completion, is known by at least one other person who will check on you. Acadia Safety & Security can assist.
- Work of a clearly hazardous nature (e.g. tasks involving high energy, acute toxics (e.g. cyanogen bromide, hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, explosives, volumes of cryogenic liquids, or high pressure situations) must not be conducted alone. Such activities must be scheduled during normal working hours and performed when another person is present. That second person must be capable of helping, if an emergency should arise.

# WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION RISK ASSESSMENT/SAFETY PLAN

FACULTY/DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE ASSESSED: \_\_\_\_\_  
M M / D D / Y Y

SUPERVISOR: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

- PERSONS WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION:  **Employees**  
 **Students**  
 **Volunteers**

## Part 1 – Risk Assessment

**When work is performed alone or in isolation, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to identify the activities and risk categories.**

**Category 1 (high risk) Activities** --- see *Working Alone or in Isolation Policy* for details  
**No person may work alone or in isolation where there is exposure to Category 1 (high-risk) activities.**

Category 1 Activities	Y	N
Work with or near exposed electrical conductors;		
Work with a class 3 or 4 laser;		
Work in confined spaces;		
Handling an acutely toxic, highly corrosive, cryogenic or other material where exposure could impair the worker's ability to call for assistance;		
Handling a radioactive isotope;		
Work where use of supplied air respiratory equipment is required;		
Work where there is risk of drowning;		
Work with material under high pressure;		
Work with an open flame and/or extreme temperatures;		
Work from heights where the use of a personal fall arrest system is required;		
Work from a power operated elevating work platform (e.g. scissor lift, boom lift);		
Work from a ladder above the sixth step/rung;		
Performing "hot work" where a fire watch is required;		
Work where there is a potential "significant" risk of violence;		
Use of a vehicle, crane, tractor, loader or other power operated mobile equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel;		
Use of machine tools and equipment (e.g. milling machines, lathes, tables saws, etc.) capable of inflicting serious injury;		
Other work involving high risk activities (specify):		

**Note: Undergraduate students must be provided with direct (physically present, or within an immediate distance), competent supervision when performing Category 1 activities.**

**Category 2 (medium risk) Activities** --- see *Working Alone or in Isolation Policy* for details  
**May be performed alone or in isolation when adequate controls are in place.**

Category 2 Activities	Y	N
Work with well-guarded equipment;		
Visiting external employers' premises or doing fieldwork;		
Laboratory work with minimal risk (e.g. recording data, operating an instrument, counting plates, monitoring an experiment or process);		
Work at the Box Office, Library Access Desk, Technology Services Support Desk and other service counters;		
One-on-one counseling;		
Other work involving medium risk activities (specify):		

**Category 3 (low risk) Activities** --- see *Working Alone or in Isolation Policy* for details  
**May be performed alone or in isolation, during normal working hours, with no specialized controls.**

Category 3 Activities	Y	N
Reading, studying, writing;		
Use of computers;		
Marking assignments/papers;		
Conducting meetings and interviews where there are more than two persons present and there is a low risk of violence;		
Other work involving low risk activities (specify):		

**Risk Factors to consider when assessing Category 2 and Category 3 activities**

Risk Factors	Y	N
Is there safe access to/egress from the work area for a lone worker?		
Are there any special needs (e.g. mobility challenges)?		
Will the work be done at height (must be below the sixth step of a ladder)?		
Will the work involve the handling or use of a hazardous substance?		
Is it likely that alcohol/drug use may be encountered?		
Is there a risk of violence?		
Are women especially at risk if they are working alone in this situation?		
Are young workers/students especially at risk if they are working alone in this situation?		
Are there other risk factors (specify)?		
EXPLANATORY REMARKS		



## Part 2 – Safety Plan

**A:** Can the risk be eliminated or significantly reduced by substituting another safer method, material, process, etc?

- No             Yes (explain below)

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**B:** Can engineering controls (i.e. physical barriers that separate people from the hazards, locked doors that prevent potentially dangerous people from accessing the work or study area, etc) be introduced to reduce the risks?

- No             Yes (explain below)

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*Note: Refer to the Acadia University Lab & Shop Safety Program for more details on hazard control when working in labs and shops. [http://healthandsafety.acadiau.ca/tl\\_files/sites/healthandsafety/resources/PDF/AcadiaUniversity\\_LaboratoryShopSafetyProgram.pdf](http://healthandsafety.acadiau.ca/tl_files/sites/healthandsafety/resources/PDF/AcadiaUniversity_LaboratoryShopSafetyProgram.pdf)*

**C:** Is there or should there be a written safe work practice or job procedure to guide safe performance of this work?

- No             Yes (explain below)

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**D: Effective Communications** - must be in place for Category 2 activities and for Category 3 activities after normal working hours.

	In Place	Not Applicable	Required (explain below)
• Portable or cellular telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Portable radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• E-mail, instant message or text message	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Social media formats			
• Personal, panic or duress alarms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Monitored surveillance cameras	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Buddy system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Check-in system and regular updating of status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other (specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPLANATORY REMARKS			

**Important note:** e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging or similar methods must not be relied upon for seeking assistance in emergency situations. In an emergency, use a phone to call 911 for assistance.

**E: Safety Training** - must be provided prior to all work activities where hazards exist.

	In Place	Not Applicable	Required (explain below)
• WHMIS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• First aid/CPR	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Lab safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Safety orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Training on a relevant safe work practice or job procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Emergency procedures/fire safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Fall protection/ladder safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Respectful workplace/ sensitivity training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Non-violent Crisis Intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other (specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPLANATORY REMARKS			

**F: Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Emergency Equipment** - must be provided for all work activities where hazards exist.

	In Place	Not Applicable	Required (explain below)
• Eye protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Face protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Head protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Respiratory protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Skin protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Foot protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Hearing protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• First aid kits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Eye wash stations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Chemical spill kits			
• Fall protection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Other (specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
EXPLANATORY REMARKS			

**Supervisor:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Affected person(s) working alone or in isolation:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name – please print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

**Administration/management:**

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Name – please print

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Signature