Occupational health and safety (OHS) working alone requirements

OHS information for workers and employers

KEY INFORMATION

 A worker is considered to be working alone if they work alone at a work site where assistance is not readily available.

The purpose of this publication is to explain the requirements of Part 28 of the *OHS Code*. If two or more workers of the same employer or different employer are working together, the working alone requirements of the *OHS Code* do not apply.

Workers who work alone

Workers who work alone can be grouped into five broad categories:

- Workers who handle cash. Examples can include convenience store clerks, retail and food outlet workers, and taxi drivers.
- Workers who travel away from base offices to meet clients. Examples can include home care workers, social services workers and bylaw enforcement officers.
- Workers who do hazardous work but have no routine interaction with customers or the public. Examples can include workers in logging, and oil and gas industries.
- Workers who travel alone but have no routine interaction with customers or the public. Examples can include truck drivers and business people in transit.
- Workers who are at risk of a violent attack because their work site is isolated from public view. Examples can include security guards and custodians.

Employer requirements for workers who work alone

If an employer has workers who work alone, the *OHS Code* requires the employer to:

- Conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential health and safety hazards in the workplace associated with working alone.
- Implement health and safety measures to eliminate, or if elimination is not reasonably practicable, control the risk to workers from the identified hazards.
- Ensure that workers have an effective way of communicating with their employer, immediate supervisor or another designated person in case of an emergency situation.
- Contact the workers at regular intervals appropriate to the hazards associated with the work.
- Ensure that workers are trained and educated so they can perform their job safely.

Special provisions for retail fuel and convenience store workers

If a worker at a gas station, retail fuelling outlet or convenience store is working alone the employer <u>must</u> provide a personal emergency transmitter monitored by the employer or the employer's designate. The personal emergency transmitter must be on the worker at all times while working alone (Workplace Violence Prevention Plan BP031).

When is a worker working alone?

The working alone requirements of the OHS Code apply when both of the following conditions are met:



- a worker is working by themselves
- assistance, in the event of an injury, illness or emergency, is not readily available to the worker

Determining if assistance is readily available

Three factors determine if assistance is "readily available" in the event of an injury, illness or emergency:

- Awareness will other persons capable of providing assistance be aware of the worker's needs?
- 2. Willingness is it reasonable to expect those other persons will provide helpful assistance?
- 3. Timelines will assistance be provided within a reasonable period of time?

This assessment must consider the level of risk associated with the circumstances of the work, e.g. type of work, location, hazards, etc. If the worker faces hazards that pose a high risk of injury, "readily available" may mean "immediately available".

What do employers need to do?

When a worker is required to work alone, the employer shall:

- Conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's work (see "For more information" section).
- Implement appropriate measures to eliminate or control the hazards identified.
- Establish an effective means of communication between the worker and persons capable of responding to the worker's need.
- Contact the worker at regular intervals appropriate to the hazards associated with the work.

Ensure a means of communication

"Effective means of communication" means provision of radio, telephone or another electronic communication device by the employer, plus regular contact with the worker by the employer (or their designate) at intervals appropriate to the nature of hazards associated with the workers work.

Alternate means of communication

If an "effective means of communication" is not practicable or readily available at the work site the employer (or their designate) shall:

- visit the worker; or
- ensure the worker contacts the employer (or their designate) at time intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards associated with the worker's work

Video surveillance camera

Maintaining contact with workers can be achieved through use of video surveillance cameras. The employer's hazard assessment should assess to what extent workers using this system can respond to other workers who require assistance. A remote video monitoring room or a non-continuous surveillance system that regularly switches images between several monitoring cameras may or may not meet the "readily available" assistance criterion of the OHS Code. The hazard assessment should help to determine if this is the case.

Employers can eliminate the risk of workers working alone if they:

- choose to organize work schedules and procedures to eliminate the need for workers to work by themselves
- overlap shifts, having multiple workers work together
- rearrange the physical location of the work so that workers maintain contact with one another



Examples

The following examples describe typical workplace situations in general terms:

Example 1: A worker is the only staff member on duty at a food court restaurant where other workers are present at nearby food outlets.

Although a worker present at other food outlets could reasonably be expected to provide or get assistance, the working alone requirements of the *OHS Code* would not apply in this situation since both conditions described are not met.

However, a lone worker at a stand-alone food outlet would meet "working alone" conditions because the worker, if injured due to an incident or as a result of a confrontation customer, would have no way of getting assistance.

Example 2: A worker equipped with a portable two-way radio or cellular telephone is working by themselves in an area where the worker cannot be seen or heard by persons capable of offering assistance.

The two conditions applicable to working alone apply in this example. The worker is working by themselves and assistance is not readily available because the worker cannot be seen or heard by persons capable of offering assistance. While part of the solution, the fact that the worker has a portable two-way radio or a cellular telephone is not a relevant factor when assessing against the two conditions.

Because the two working alone conditions are met, the employer is required to conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's work. The employer must also establish an effective means of communication between the worker and persons capable of responding to the worker's needs.

The assessment may show that the portable two-way radio or cellular telephone is effective, or may suggest alternatives are necessary.

Example 3: A worker driving on the highway between Calgary and Edmonton versus a worker driving on a remote logging road.

It is reasonable to expect during daytime hours a worker driving the highway requires assistance, other highway users would become aware of the need, and do so in a timely manner. The working alone requirements do not apply; however, if driving at night, particularly on a less traveled roadway, working alone requirements could apply.

By contrast, it is reasonable to expect that a worker driving on a remote logging road will not encounter anyone on the roadway. In the event of an injury, illness or emergency, it is unreasonable to expect someone will be aware of the situation or be willing to provide assistance in a timely manner. The working alone requirements apply.

Example 4: A nurse on night shift at a psychiatric unit versus a nurse on dayshift at a children's unit.

The circumstances of the work in these two situations are quite different, although the work site – the health care centre – is the same. The availability of assistance in each situation must be assessed individually from the perspective of awareness, willingness and timeliness.

Given the increased risk to personal safety of working the night shift on a psychiatric unit, expectations on the availability of assistance are also greater.

Particularly if the unit is large and few staff are on duty, it may not be reasonable to expect other persons capable of offering assistance to be aware of the nurse's needs. Given the potential hazards to which the nurse is exposed, the timeliness of a response for assistance should be faster. The situation of a nurse on the night shift at a psychiatric unit may trigger the working alone requirements.



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OHS Contact Centre

Report serious incidents, make immediate danger complaints, ask OHS questions.

Anywhere in Alberta

• 1-866-415-8690

Edmonton & surrounding area

• 780-415-8690

Deaf or hearing impaired

- 1-800-232-7215 (Alberta)
- 780-427-9999 (Edmonton)

File a complaint online

ohsComplaintsPortal.labour.alberta.ca

Online incident reporting

Potentially serious, mine or mine site incidents

oir.labour.alberta.ca

Website

alberta.ca/OHS

For more information

Hazard Assessment and Control: a handbook for Alberta employers and workers (BP018)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018tmp

Hazard Assessment and Control: formal hazard assessment and control template (BP018TMP)

ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp018tmp

Working Alone Safely: A Guide for Employers and Employees (WA003) ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/wa003

Workplace Violence Prevention Plan Employer Guide: For retail fuel and convenience stores (BP031) ohs-pubstore.labour.alberta.ca/bp031

Get Copies of *OHS Act*, Regulations and Code

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qp.gov.ab.ca

Occupational Health and Safety

alberta.ca/ohs-act-regulation-code.aspx

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Working Alone Checklists

Checklist for Employees Who Handle Cash

(e.g. store clerks, retail and food outlet employees, taxi drivers)

The questions in **bold** reflect mandatory requirements. Other questions suggest recommended practices that are highly desirable. These checklist can also be found in the retail guide and working alone guide.

Note: Retail fuel and convenience store workers have additional requirements.

See: Part 27 Violence and Harassment Explanation Guide

Yes	No	N/A	CASH AND MERCHANDISE CONTROL
			Do you have a policy to control cash and valuables in the workplace?
			Do you have a procedure to minimize cash availability?
			Do you use devices to limit the cash-on-hand to less than \$50?
			Do you post signs notifying the public of limited cash on the premises?
Yes	No	N/A	VISIBILITY
			Do you have good visibility in the workplace to discourage robbery?
			Is there good, two-way visibility of the cash handling area?
			Is the cash register located where it is clearly visible to observers outside?
			Is the cash register visible from all sides?
		B	Are shelves and counters visible throughout the premises?
			Are all indoor lights bright and working properly?
			Is the entrance to the building easily seen from the street and free of heavy shrub growth?
			Is lighting bright in parking and adjacent areas?
Yes	No	N/A	EMPLOYEE TRAINING
			Ensure employees are trained and competent to work alone safely?
			How do employees get timely assistance if needed?
			Maintaining security system.
			The use of the "Robbery Awareness?"



			Edmonton Police Service or equivalent resources?			
			Strategies used by the business to discourage robberies?			
			How to behave during a robbery attempt?			
			Emergency response procedures robberies/crimes on site?			
Yes	No	N/A	SECURITY SYSTEM			
			Do you have a security system at your work site?			
			Do you post signs in prominent places to publicize the use of security?			
	In choosing the security system, has consideration been given to the following systems:					
			Video surveillance camera			
			Alarm (personal and remote)			
			Mirrors			
			Observation windows			
			Height markers			
			Others? Specify:			
Yes	No	N/A	COMMUNICATION			
Yes	No	N/A	COMMUNICATION Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance?			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance?			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following:			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols?			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols? Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person?			
			Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols? Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person? Personal alarm system? Agreements with a nearby business for regular visual and/or telephone			
	the n		Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols? Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person? Personal alarm system? Agreements with a nearby business for regular visual and/or telephone contact?			
Does	the n	nethod of co	Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols? Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person? Personal alarm system? Agreements with a nearby business for regular visual and/or telephone contact? Are emergency telephone numbers readily accessible by employees?			
Does	the n	nethod of co	Means of communication for employees to contact capable assistance? mmunication involve one or more of the following: The use of regular security patrols? Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person? Personal alarm system? Agreements with a nearby business for regular visual and/or telephone contact? Are emergency telephone numbers readily accessible by employees? OTHER MEASURES Do you have a violence prevention plan and a harassment prevention			
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Checklist for Employees Who Meet Clients Away From Their Base Office

(e.g. home care workers and nurses, social services workers, real estate agents, bylaw and government enforcement officers)

The questions in **bold** reflect mandatory requirements. Other questions suggest recommended practices that are highly desirable.

Yes	No	N/A	EMPLOYEE TRAINING
			Ensure employees are trained and competent to work alone safely?
			Are employees trained to recognize potentially violent situations?
			Are employees trained in non-violent responses to threatening situations?
			Are employees trained in safe work procedures when meeting clients away?
Yes	No	N/A	SAFE WORK PROCEDURE
			Do you have a violence prevention plan and a harassment prevention plan?
			Safe work procedure for employees working at their client's premises?
			procedure include an evaluation based on risk e into consideration the following:
			Client behaviour?
			Location (unsafe area, isolation, poor lighting, unlit parking, unsafe building)
			Presence of dangerous items (weapons, vicious pets)?
			Are employees required to have a safe visit plan for high risk situations
Does	s the sa	afe visit p	plan consider the following control measures?
			Based on the above evaluation?
			Use of cell phone to maintain regular contact with the office?
			"Buddy system" in a high risk situation while on the visit?
			Arrange to meet the client at a safe location?
			Phone designated person prior to and after leaving the client's premises?
			Defer visit until proper safety measures can be met?
			Othore? Specify:

No	N/A	COMMUNICATION
		Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance?
the i	method of	f communication involve one or more of the following:
		Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with designated person?
		Check-in points with other employees?
		Others? Specify:

Checklist for Employees Who Perform Hazardous Work

(e.g. forestry workers, oil and gas workers)

The questions in **bold** reflect mandatory requirements. Other questions suggest recommended practices that are highly desirable.

Yes	No	N/A	EMPLOYEE TRAINING
			Do you ensure employees are trained and competent to work alone safely?
			Are employees aware of the increased risk from carrying out the hazardous work alone?
Yes	No	N/A	SAFE WORK PROCEDURE
			Do you have a violence prevention plan and a harassment prevention plan?
			Do you have a safe work procedure for the hazardous work?
			Develop the safe work procedure involving affected employees?
			Is there a procedure requiring employees to sign out before a job, and to provide information on a travelling plan and an estimated time of return?
			Is there a procedure for the employee to check-in prior to and at the end of the planned activities at the site?
Yes	No	N/A	EQUIPMENT SAFETY
			Is equipment in good working condition prior to being used?
			Does all equipment/machinery used by employees meet regulatory
Ш			standards?
			standards? Are equipment and machinery being used in accordance with the
Yes	No	□ □ N/A	standards? Are equipment and machinery being used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications? Is a safety stop switch used in high hazard machinery to prevent continued activation in the event the worker is in trouble or moves away from the
Yes	No	□ □ N/A □	Are equipment and machinery being used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications? Is a safety stop switch used in high hazard machinery to prevent continued activation in the event the worker is in trouble or moves away from the machine?
Yes	No	□ □ N/A □ □	Are equipment and machinery being used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications? Is a safety stop switch used in high hazard machinery to prevent continued activation in the event the worker is in trouble or moves away from the machine? EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES
Yes	No D		Are equipment and machinery being used in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications? Is a safety stop switch used in high hazard machinery to prevent continued activation in the event the worker is in trouble or moves away from the machine? EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES Do you equip employees with the appropriate first aid supplies?

Yes	No	N/A	COMMUNICATION
			Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance?
Does	the m	ethod of	communication involve one or more of the following:
			Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact?
			Schedule check-in points with other employees?
			Alarm system that could alert other employees?
			Is there an "overdue employee" procedure to initiate searches for employees who fail to report?
			Others? Specify:

Checklist for Employees Who Travel Alone

(e.g. truck drivers, field workers and business people in transit)
The questions in **bold** reflect mandatory requirements. Other questions suggest recommended practices that are highly desirable.

Yes	No	N/A	EMPLOYEE TRAINING
			Do you ensure employees are trained and competent to work alone safely?
			Are employees informed of the hazards associated with working alone?
			For employees who have to travel alone to remote locations, do they have some training in emergency survival?
Yes	No	N/A	SAFE WORK PROCEDURE
			Do you have a violence prevention plan and a harassment prevention plan?
			Do you have a safe work procedure for employees travelling alone?
			Do employees have adequate rest periods between work periods when they are travelling alone?
Yes	No	N/A	EQUIPMENT SAFETY
			Do you ensure vehicles used by employees are in good working condition?
			Are all vehicles used by employees under regular maintenance programs?
Yes	No	N/A	EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES
Yes	No	N/A	EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies?
Yes	No	N/A	
Yes	No	N/A	Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies?
Yes	No \[\] \[\] \[\] \[\] No	N/A	Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme
			Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme cold or inclement weather conditions?
			Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme cold or inclement weather conditions? COMMUNICATION Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need
Yes	No	N/A	Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme cold or inclement weather conditions? COMMUNICATION Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance? Do you have a procedure for tracking "overdue" employees that is
Yes	No	N/A	Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme cold or inclement weather conditions? COMMUNICATION Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance? Do you have a procedure for tracking "overdue" employees that is appropriate to the hazards?
Yes	No	N/A	Do you provide employees with the appropriate first aid supplies? Do employees carry the required first aid supplies? Do employees carry the emergency supplies when they travel in extreme cold or inclement weather conditions? COMMUNICATION Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance? Do you have a procedure for tracking "overdue" employees that is appropriate to the hazards? f communication involve the following:

Checklist for Employees at Risk of Violence Because They Are Isolated

(e.g. custodians, security guards)
The questions in **bold** reflect mandatory requirements. Other questions suggest recommended practices that are highly desirable.

Yes	No	N/A	EMPLOYEE TRAINING			
			Do you ensure employees are trained and competent to work alone safely?			
			Are employees informed of the hazards associated with working in isolation?			
			Are employees trained in non-violent responses to threatening situations?			
			Are employees trained in the proper use of security systems to prevent/discourage intruders?			
			Are employees trained in questioning strangers about the appropriateness of their presence?			
Yes	No	N/A	SAFE WORK PROCEDURE			
			Do you have a violence prevention plan and a harassment prevention plan?			
			Do you have a safe work procedure to secure the work site?			
			Does the safe work procedure include appropriate behaviours when confronted with an intruder?			
			Does the safe work procedure require a check for secure work site prior to the start and at the end of the shift?			
Yes	No	N/A	SITE SECURITY			
			Do you provide a safe work site for employees working alone?			
			Does the site have a security system?			
Does	Does the security system include the following:					
			Remote alarm?			
			Personal alarm?			
			Video surveillance camera?			
			Others? Specify:			
			Is the alarm system regularly checked for correct operation?			
			Are all doors and windows secured with appropriate barriers?			
			Are there adequate lights at the site entrance and narking areas?			

Yes	No	N/A	COMMUNICATION
			Do you have an effective means of communication for employees to contact persons capable of responding when employees need immediate assistance?
Does t	the me	ethod of co	ommunication involve the following:
			Regular telephone, cell phone, or radio contact with a designated person?
			Regular security patrol?
			Alarm system to security services?
			Regular visit by co-workers
			Others? Specify: