

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE NO. 459

WORKING ALONE

Background

The Division believes that all staff have a right to be safe on school property and while attending to duties as part of their conditions of employment including while they are working alone.

This Administrative Procedure outlines the legislation around working alone and provides written procedures for safe work practices that must be put in place when a Division worker is working alone. Working alone can result in dangerous and hazardous situations. It is important that workers understand the inherent risks of working alone and by adhering to this Administrative Procedure, the risks to Division workers can be minimized.

Definition

Working Alone - based on the Alberta Occupational Health and Safety Code, Part 28: Work Alone legislation, workers are considered to be working alone when they:

- Are working alone at a worksite, and
- Assistance is not readily available if there is an emergency or the worker is injured or ill.

Note: Working alone also includes if workers are out of visual and voice contact with another person at the site.

Readily Available - three factors determine whether assistance is “readily available” in the event of an injury, illness or emergency:

1. Awareness: will other people capable of providing assistance be aware of the worker’s needs?
2. Willingness: is it reasonable to expect that these other people will provide helpful assistance?
3. Timeliness: will assistance be provided within a reasonable time period of time?

The assessment of whether assistance is readily available must consider the risk associated with the work (e.g., the type of work, the remoteness of the location, the hazards that are commonly present, etc). If workers face hazards that pose high risk of serious injury, the requirement that assistance be “readily available” may actually need to be treated as “immediately available.”

Procedure

1. Only workers who demonstrate competence, technical skill, knowledge in their job, and knowledge of health and safety and emergency issues shall be allowed to work alone. This will be determined by the worker’s Supervisor (Principal) or Manager.

2. Risk must be minimized by limiting/prohibiting high risk tasks while working alone. Where possible, schedule high risk activities during normal business hours or when another worker is present. High risk activities include but are not limited to:
 - 2.1 Working in confined spaces,
 - 2.2 Working at heights,
 - 2.3 Laboratory work,
 - 2.4 Working with highly hazardous substances/materials/equipment; or
 - 2.5 Other hazards identified by hazard assessment
3. Physical disabilities or medical conditions which would exclude the worker from working alone must be taken into consideration.
4. All workers must be trained and be familiar with the site Emergency Response Plan.
5. All emergency response supplies such as a First Aid Kit, Eyewash Station/Bottle, Fire Extinguishers, etc., must be readily available to an employee working alone.
- 6. Principals and site supervisors shall ensure:**
 - 6.1 Conduct a written hazard assessment to identify existing and/or potential hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's place of work and that working alone, itself, is identified as a hazard. The following hazard assessment documentation can be used for working alone:
 - 6.1.1 Field Level Hazard Assessment
 - 6.1.2 Working Alone Communication Plan
 - 6.2 Ensure the hazard assessment is reassessed:
 - 6.2.1 At reasonably practicable intervals to prevent unsafe and unhealthy working conditions,
 - 6.2.2 When a work process or operation changes or a new work process is introduced,
 - 6.2.3 Before significant additions or alterations are made to a worksite.
 - 6.3 Ensure affected workers are involved in the hazard assessment so they are aware of the identified hazards and implementation of appropriate measures to eliminate or control the hazards.

6.4 An effective means of communication between the worker and persons capable of responding to the worker's needs is established consisting of:

6.4.1 Radio communication,

6.4.2 Landline or cellular telephone communication, or

6.4.3 Some other effective means of electronic communication.

Note: If an effective electronic communication is not practicable or available at the worksite then the Principal or designate must be present at the worksite for the duration of the work so the worker is not working alone.

6.5 Safety measures to reduce the risk to workers from the identified hazards are implemented,

6.6 Workers and supervisors will be in contact at regular intervals appropriate to the nature of the hazards associated with the work and the contact method and intervals are included in the written hazard assessment document.

6.7 Workers and supervisors have identified and documented a plan to follow in the written hazard assessment in the event the worker misses a check-in and cannot be contacted.

6.8 Near misses, incidents and injuries are investigated, reported on our Online Incident Reporting System and immediately reported to the OHS Department.

Reference: Sections: 52,53,54,222 of the Education Act
Occupational Health and Safety Code - Part 28: Work Alone
Alberta OHS Bulletin - Working Alone: OHS Information for Employers and Workers