

Working Alone and Remotely

Working alone and in remote areas without immediate access to emergency services is not always avoidable. Employers have a duty to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with tasks where working alone is required.

Situations where workers should generally not work alone include: working at heights, around high voltage power, and where heavy machinery is in use. Caution must also be taken when driving long distances is required, and where there is a significant risk of injury from the work being performed, if the risks cannot be eliminated or effectively controlled.

Reducing The Risks

Some of the ways to reduce risks associated with isolated work, include:

1. **Communication Systems:** Implement effective personal security and communication systems through radio and satellite devices.
2. **Buddy System:** Ensure workers have a colleague to escort them when undertaking a job and to be readily available if an incident were to occur.
3. **Workplace Layout and Design:** Conduct an assessment of the workplace to identify any potential hazards the worker needs to be aware of and develop control measures to mitigate the risks.
4. **Movement Records:** Keep and maintain a record of all worker movements outside the workplace.
5. **Training, Information and Instruction:** Ensure workers are prepared and understand the nature of work to be carried out as well as all associated risks and control measures.
6. **Emergency Plans:** Create a comprehensive emergency plan based on the type of work, location, and size of the workplace for emergency situations, including medical assistance and treatment protocols.

Legislation

According to section 3-24(2) — Working alone or at isolated place of employment — of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulations, 2020:

Where a worker is required to work alone, or at an isolated place of employment, the risks arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's work or the isolation of the place of employment must be identified by an employer or contractor, in consultation with the [Occupational Health and Safety] committee, the [worker] representative, or where there is no committee or representative—the workers shall identify the risks arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's work or the isolation of the place of employment.

An employer or contractor shall also take all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or reduce the risks identified.

The steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the risks must include the establishment of an effective communication system that consists of radio communication; phone or cellular phone communication; or any other means that provides effective communication in view of the risks involved; and may include any of the following:

- regular contact by the employer or contractor with the worker working alone or at an isolated place of employment;
- limitations on, or prohibitions of, specified activities;
- establishment of minimum training requirements and/or experience, or other standards of competency;
- provision of personal protective equipment;
- establishment of safe work practices or procedures;
- provision of emergency supplies for use in travelling under conditions of extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions.

SCSA Guide to OHS Legislation App



Tool Box Talk

When accidents and incidents happen on the jobsite, we are always quick to point the finger at lack of training, not following practices or procedures, or even improper supervision. The idea that the hazards and dangers associated with the job were not properly communicated to all of the workers is often missed.

Tool Box Talks can go by many names, and although formats may vary, these meetings all serve one purpose: to inform employees and contract workers. Tool Box Talks are short, informal, meetings between management and the workers on a jobsite. The goal of these meetings is to reinforce current safe job procedures, inform workers of new and/or relevant procedures, review recent safety violations/incidents, and ensure workers are up-to-date on the information required to complete their work safely.

Always use a Tool Box Talk form to record the meeting topic, date, who was in attendance, and any follow-up actions to be taken. Not only do these forms help with consistency of record keeping, but they also ensure that nothing is missed. At the end of the meeting have management sign off on the form.

One of the most important aspects of a Tool Box Talk is giving workers an opportunity to voice their concerns and ask questions. All employees have a right to participate in health and safety as it relates to their work and it is the supervisor or manager's responsibility to create an environment for them to do so. Once the meeting is over, and the form is filled out, it should be filed with other documented Tool Box Talks.

Remember that Tool Box Talks are short and informal, they are not meant to be intimidating. Use the opportunity to have fun and stay on top of what is necessary to keep safety culture a strong part of the business.

For a full listing of Tool Box Talk topics, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/resources/tool-box-talks

For a copy of the Tool Box Talk form, visit: www.scsaonline.ca/pdf/Tool_Box_Meeting.pdf

About the Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association

The Saskatchewan Construction Safety Association (SCSA) is an industry-funded, membership-based, nonprofit organization that provides cost-effective, accessible safety training and advice to employers and employees in the construction industry throughout the province to reduce the human and financial losses associated with injuries. Registered March 20, 1995, the SCSA is, and has been since inception, committed to injury prevention. Serving almost 10,000 member companies with business offices in both Regina and Saskatoon, the major business units of the association are Advisory Services, Business Development, Corporate Services, Program Services and Training. The mission of the SCSA is constructing safety leadership in Saskatchewan and the vision is to create the safest construction environment in Canada.