

There are many factors to consider when a worker is working alone, planning and preparation is essential to ensuring the safety of the worker. It is crucial for companies to have a strong Health and Safety Management System in place and for workers to follow their company's safe work practices and procedures to ensure they are working in a safe manner and minimizing risks. Workers need to be aware of the hazards and/or risks associated with working alone, a communication system must be established and workers need to know what to do in the event of an emergency. Having the proper procedures and policies in place will help ensure the safety of the worker who is working alone.

What Is Meant By 'Working Alone'

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS), a person is "alone" at work when they are on their own; or when they cannot be seen or heard by another person.

When Is Working Alone A Problem

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, whether a situation is a high or low risk will depend on the location, type of work, interaction with the public, or the consequences of an emergency, accident, injury, etc.

What Is A Check-in Procedure

A check-in procedure is established between the worker working alone, and a designated individual. Typically, check-ins are done by phone; however, this may vary depending on the situation.

An example of a check-in procedure is:

- Prepare a daily work plan so it is known where the lone employee will be and when.
- Identify one main contact at the office, plus a back up.
- Define under what circumstances the lone employee will check in and how often.
- Stick to the visual check or call-in schedule. You may wish to have a written log of contact.
- Have the contact person call or visit the lone employee periodically to make sure he or she is okay.
- Develop an emergency action plan to be followed if the lone employee does not check-in when he or she is supposed to.

From Legislation

3-24(1) In this section, "to work alone" means to work at a worksite as the only worker of the employer or contractor at that worksite, in circumstances where assistance is not readily available to the worker in the event of injury, ill health or emergency.

(2) If a worker is required to work alone or at an isolated place of employment, an employer or contractor, in consultation with the committee, the 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. (3) An employer or contractor shall take all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or reduce the risks identified pursuant to subsection (2). (4) The steps to be taken to eliminate or reduce the risks pursuant to subsection (3):

(a) must include the establishment of an effective communication system that consists of:

- (i) radio communication;
- (ii) phone or cellular phone communication; or
- (iii) any other means that provides effective communication in view of the risks involved; and

(b) may include any of the following:

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

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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.