

Xchanging Safety Sheet

Number 115

Working Alone

Working Alone presents risks to employees, if, in the event of an emergency or illness, they are not able to summon assistance from another person. Employees are 'working alone' when:

- they are working solo
- they are out of sight and hearing range from another employee
- when they cannot expect a visit from a fellow worker or member of the public for some time.

It is essential employers assess the risks associated with working alone, and implement adequate control measures to reduce the risk of injury.

What should we consider when addressing the risks associated with Working Alone?

When identifying the risks associated with working alone, and implementing control measures, the following elements need to be taken into consideration:

- Develop emergency procedures for employees working alone – these outline appropriate measures to take to ensure personal safety, and the reporting of incidents or near misses
- Provide employees with a means of contacting a supervisor or fellow employee in the event of an emergency – this may be emergency beacons, mobile phones, two-way radio etc
- Consult with employees and complete a risk assessment to identify hazards they may be exposed to throughout the course of their work tasks
- Ensure employees are aware of the risks they may face and the procedures to reduce the likelihood of injury – provide on the job training prior to commencing work alone
- Provide training and communication to employees working alone – ensure communication is appropriate to the workforce. Eg for employees whom English may be a second language, ensure training material is available in their preferred language
- Provide and train employees in written Safe Work Practices (to reduce risks as far as is reasonably practicable)
- Ensure all employees are aware of their general obligations under the OHS Act. Specifically, employees are required to take reasonable care to ensure their own health and safety at work
- Have regular contact with employees working alone, to ensure their safety.

Strategies to prevent injuries from Working Alone

Identify	How a person could be injured through working alone
Assess	How likely this is to occur and what the consequence would be
Control	The risks by ensuring that control measures are implemented
Review	The risk management strategies to ensure they are adequate.

Investigating working alone hazards using a short checklist

Here are some issues concerning working alone that may affect the safety of employees. If you (or they) answer 'no' to any of these, then further action may be needed.

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Questions	Yes	No – needs attention
All potential 'working alone' activities have been assessed – and, where there are high risks, are redefined as 'two person' activities		
Employees are trained in, and provided with, specific emergency procedures, including arrangements for vehicle break downs		
Emergency procedures have been rehearsed to rescue persons working alone, including contractors working alone on roofs		
All employees are aware of the procedure to report incidents and near misses in the workplace		
Communication to employees is in their preferred language		
Employees are trained to a competent level in applicable Safe Work Practices for the tasks they are required to perform		
On the job training is provided to employees		
An assessment has been made, and appropriate communication methods are provided for employees – eg emergency beacons, mobile phones, two-way radio, duress alarms		
Risk assessments have been conducted in consultation with employees to identify hazards associated with work tasks		
Appropriate control measures are implemented for identified hazards		
Physical changes to the work environment have been considered for those working alone – eg well lighted walk ways and car parks, wide reception desks, escape pathways		
Regular contact is made with employees to ensure their safety and health when working alone		

References

WorkSafe Western Australia – Working Alone Guidance Note
WorkSafe Victoria Guidance Note, Real Estate Agent – Out of Office Safety

Services Available

Xchanging can provide clients with advice concerning appropriate controls aimed at achieving injury prevention at your workplace. Please contact the OHS Consultants at risk.management@au.xchanging.com for further information.



Disclaimer: The information contained here is not intended to be relied upon as a substitute for legal or other professional advice. Meeting the requirements outlined does not guarantee you are compliant with the laws relating to health and safety in the workplace. It is your individual responsibility to meet all statutory and legal obligations, and further professional advice or directives may still be required. Updated: December 2009