Working alone Meeting Kit

WHO WORKS ALONE?

Working alone includes all workers who may go for a period where they do not have direct contact with a co-worker. For example, the receptionist in a large office building may be considered a “lone” worker. Alternatively, a construction worker who is doing work in a bathroom or other location that cannot be seen by co-workers may also be considered a lone worker. Other examples are gas station attendants, convenience store clerks, food outlet workers, taxi drivers, home care workers, social service workers, security guards or custodians.

At the end of the day, a person is “alone” at work when they can not be seen or heard by another person.

FACTORS IN ASSESSING WORKING ALONE

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when other circumstances are present. The following circumstances make it important to assess each situation individually.

- **Length of Time**
- **Time Of the Day**
- **Forms of Communication**
- **Location Of the Work**
- **Type of Work**

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO KEEP A LONE WORKER SAFE

- Avoid having a lone worker whenever possible, especially for jobs with a recognized risk.
- Assess the hazards of your workplace.
- Talk to workers about their work. Get their input about the work they do and possible solutions.

- Investigate incidents at your workplace and learn from incidents in similar workplaces.
- Take corrective action to prevent or minimize the potential risks of working alone.
- Provide appropriate training and education to both the lone worker and the person tasked to respond.
- Report all situations, incidents or ‘near misses’ where being alone increased the severity of the situation. Analyze this information and make changes to company policy where necessary.
- Schedule higher risk tasks to be done during normal business hours, or when another worker capable of helping in an emergency is present.
- Establish a check-in procedure. Make sure that regular contact is kept with all workers. Establish ways to account for people (visually or verbally) while they are working.

Example of A Check-In Procedure

- Prepare a daily work plan so it is known where the lone worker will be and when.
- Identify one main person to be the contact at the office, plus a back up.
- Define under what circumstances the lone worker 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 worker periodically to make sure they are okay.
- Pick out a code word to be used to identify or confirm that help is needed.
- Develop an emergency plan to be followed if the lone worker does not check-in.
- The contact person must know when and how to activate the emergency plan.

When Travelling Out of The Office, The Main Contact Person Should Know the Following Details

- Destination

- Estimated time of arrival
- Return time or date
- Contact information
- Mode of travel (public transit, car, plane, etc.)
- Alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc

OVERVIEW OF WORKING ALONE

Training: No employee should be working alone unless they have proven their competency. Managers should keep a training log and identify areas that need additional consideration.

Meetings: Regular meetings with lone workers should be scheduled to help identify any areas for improvement. Meetings with hands-on workers with experience of the role will help managers to better understand the risks.

Devices For Raising Critical Alarms: Devices that allow employees to press a panic button quickly to gain the attention of a response team within seconds will give them the best chance of survival.

FINAL WORD

Prearrange a start and finish time for the job and arrange to have someone check-in with the lone worker at least every two hours. Ensure the lone worker has a means of communication such as a cell phone or two-way radio. Each worker needs to take responsibility for their own safety by ensuring they knows the job, the hazards, and what to do if something goes wrong.