

Working Alone Risk Assessment

Working alone requires supervisor/PI knowledge or approval.

This document will help to identify the level of risk of working alone situations, and understand what controls and documentation may be required.

Approval for working alone or after normal hours must consider:

- Tasks and hazards involved in the work
- Consequences resulting from a worst-case scenario
- The possibility of an incident or injury that would prevent an individual from calling for help
- The individual's training and experience level
- The time the work is to be conducted
- Access to emergency assistance

Conduct a risk assessment as per the guideline (below), identifying the hazards involved and safety protocols in place.

- **High risk:** Working alone prohibited as per applicable regulations.
- **Moderate risk:** Each area must develop a [Standard Operating Procedure](#) for working alone, including materials, equipment and processes that may not be used, security measures to protect against theft, property damage or personal injury due to an intruder, and communication methods and protocols. All individuals who are approved to work alone must be trained on the SOP.
- **Low risk:** May work alone, however minimal precautions are required, including periodic check-in (supervisor or Security), access to phone and security measures to protect against theft, property damage or personal injury due to intruder. Individuals should follow Security Services [-Personal Safety Guidelines](#). A campus safety app is also available for download for those working on campus, which includes emergency tools, notifications, and tips for staying safe. Visit <https://security.mcmaster.ca/safety-app/> for more information.
- **For those working in hospital hosted locations please see the following resources for working alone safely.**

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WORKING ALONE RISK ASSESSMENT

HIGH RISK – WORKING ALONE PROHIBITED

- Confined space entry
- Electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts
- Trenches

- Portable ladder that exceeds 6 metres in length and is not securely fastened, or work with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic
- Use of fall arrest equipment (without travel restraint) or scaffolds
- Machines and power tools that may cause critical injury (e.g. lathe, table saw, chain saw)
- Work with acutely toxic material (e.g. cyanides, fumigants, hydrofluoric acid) as described in Safety Data Sheet (SDS)
- Use of supplied air or self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)
- Risk of drowning
- Use of a vehicle, boom or similar equipment near live power lines where it is possible for any part of the equipment or its load to make contact with the live power line
- Open flame associated with flammable solvents
- Hot work where a fire watch is required
- Other tasks which based on hazard analysis is deemed to require more than one person for safety reasons
- Other tasks which based on a hazard analysis are deemed prohibited

MODERATE RISK – STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE REQUIRED

- Large volumes of chemicals
- X-rays
- Radioactive materials (above exempt quantities)
- Exposed, energized electrical systems
- Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs
- Class 3B and 4 lasers
- Work with materials acutely hazardous to health
- Work with human subjects
- Extreme temperature environments
- Handling of cash
- Dealing directly with the public
- Work in isolated areas (fieldwork, secure access areas which may prevent quick response by emergency responders)

LOW RISK – MAY WORK ALONE USING STANDARDIZED PERSONAL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Custodial work
- Building maintenance with low risk
- Laboratory work with minimal risk (analytical equipment, monitoring equipment or process, work not involving hazardous materials)
- Routine office work or study