



## Administrative Procedure 5180

### *Working Alone and In Isolation*

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**Board Governance Policy Cross Reference:** [1](#), [4](#), [12](#), [13](#)

**Administrative Procedures Cross Reference:**

[School Facility Hours of Operations](#)

[Staff Access Cards/Keys](#)

**Form Cross Reference:**

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**Legal/Regulatory Reference:**

[The Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation](#)

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The Brandon School Division recognizes that employees who work alone or in isolation are more vulnerable than those who have others present in their workplace. The Division recognizes the importance of identifying and controlling risks to its workers. This Administrative Procedure should be used as a guideline for working alone and in isolation as required for Part 9 of the *Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Act and Regulation*.

#### **Definitions**

**Working Alone** – Working alone means the performance of any work function by a worker who:

- Is the only worker for that employer at that workplace at any time; or
- Is not directly supervised by the employer, or another person designated as a supervisor by the employer, at any time.

The definition of working alone indicates the regulation applies essentially to all workers who are performing a job function at a particular workplace location when they are not in the presence of their employer, another person in a supervisory capacity (designated by the same employer), another worker directly associated with the same employer.

**Working in Isolation** – Working in isolation means working in circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of injury, ill health or emergency.

The definition of working in isolation refers to those persons whose work sometimes or regularly requires them to be at a worksite that is remote from other workers, depending on the physical set up of the facility in question, and in circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of injury, ill health or emergency.

Many workers may fall into either category. However, in the case of working alone, they may be in contact with workers associated with a different employer or the general public. Such contact does not rule out the concept that the worker is working alone, and therefore this situation will require the same particular attention as outlined in the Regulation.

### **Identification of Hazards and Risks Associated with Working Alone**

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when specific hazards are present. 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. This wide variety of circumstances makes it important to assess each situation individually.

High-risk activities are those activities where the potential for incidents and accidents or injuries is deemed to be highly likely. High risk activities include the following:

- Working at heights;
- Work in a confined space;
- Work with electricity;
- Work with hazardous substances or materials;
- Work with hazardous equipment;
- Work with materials under pressure; or
- Others that may be identified by employee.

Other areas of concern are those activities where, although the potential for accidents or injuries is deemed to be highly unlikely, situations can be at times unpredictable and need to be carefully considered. These situations include:

- Employees with pre-existing medical conditions who are at an increased risk of sudden or severe illness and injury when working on the job site, inside buildings or on school grounds.
- Exposure to threats of violence or violent acts perpetrated by members of the public who may be in schools for legitimate school functions, community events as approved through existing process, or unauthorized intruders who are able to gain access to school buildings.

Low-risk activities are those activities where the potential for the occurrence of accidents and injuries is deemed to be highly unlikely and where the severity of the incident is generally thought not to have serious consequences.

### **Performing a Working Alone Hazard and Risk Assessment**

Supervisors and workers are required to assess the conditions or circumstances under which an employee may be working alone to determine the risks, the level of risk, and the prevention measures required to reduce those identified risks to an acceptable level.

The following are some points to consider when performing a hazard assessment:

- Reasonableness:
  - Is it reasonable for the employee to be alone at all?
  - Is it legal for the employee to be alone while doing certain activities?
  - What time of the day will the employee be alone?
- Length of time:
  - Length of time the employee will be working alone.
  - What is a reasonable length of time for the employee to be alone?
  - How long will the employee be alone to finish the job?
- Communication:
  - What forms of communication are available?
  - Is it necessary to be able to see the employee, or is voice communication adequate?
  - Will emergency communication systems work properly in all situations? (i.e. confined spaces)
  - If the communication systems are located in a vehicle, do you need alternative arrangements to ensure coverage for the employee when they are away from the vehicle?
- Location of the work:
  - Is the work in a remote or isolated location? It is important to recognize that a remote location does not have to be far away. Storage rooms where assistance is not readily available can be considered remote or isolated.
  - Does the work involve confined spaces or work on the roof?
  - Is transportation necessary to get there? If yes, what kind of transportation is needed?
  - Is the vehicle equipped with emergency supplies such as a first aid kit, and food and water?

- Will the person be required to carry some or all of the emergency supplies with them when they leave the vehicle?
- Does the person require training to be able to use the first aid equipment?
- What are the consequences if the vehicle breaks down?
- Will the person have to leave the vehicle for long periods of time?
- What is the type or nature of work?
- Is there adequate training and education provided for the person to be able to work alone safely?
- What are the tasks and hazards involved in the work to be performed?
- Is there adequate personal protective equipment available? Is it in good working order? Have workers been trained to use the equipment?
- What machinery, tools or equipment will be used?
- Is there a high-risk activity involved?
- Is fatigue likely to be a factor?
- Are there extremes of temperature?
- Is there a risk of an animal attack, insect bite (poisonous or allergic reaction), etc.?
- If the person is working inside a locked building, how will emergency services be able to get in? (i.e. Custodial staff in a locked and secured school)
- Does the work involve working with money or other valuables?
- Considerations related to the individual who is working alone:
  - Are there any pre-existing medical conditions that may increase the risk?
  - Does the person have adequate levels of experience and training? (i.e. first aid, communication systems, vehicle breakdowns, relevant knowledge of the Administrative Procedures and/or outdoor survival skills)

### **Situations in Which Working Alone is Prohibited**

There are certain situations where working alone will not be permitted. Working alone will be prohibited under the following circumstances:

- Confined space entry;
- Working on energized electrical conductor or equipment;

- Power line hazards: use of a vehicle, crane, or similar equipment near a live power line where it is possible for any part of the equipment or its load to make contact with the live power line.
- View obstruction: A vehicle, crane, mobile equipment, or similar material handling equipment where the operator does not have a full view of the intended path of travel.
- The use of fall arrest equipment and scaffolds;
- Any hot work applications where a fire watch is required; or
- Tasks which, based on the risk assessment conducted by the supervisor, are deemed to require more than one person.

### **Responsibilities**

In order for the working alone procedures to be effective, they must be implemented with reason and diligence. To achieve this, respective responsibilities have been defined to ensure those who can positively impact on the potential risks of working alone are aware of their responsibilities and have the knowledge and skill to effectively implement working alone guidelines.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities**

- High Risk Activities:
  - Identify the risks or hazards associated with the work to be performed or the environment where the work is to be done;
  - Communicate the results of the risk and hazard assessment to all affected employees and others conducting similar work;
  - Provide written working alone plan to any affected employees;
  - The working alone plan must include:
    - Procedures to eliminate or minimize the identified risks;
    - Length of time a worker may be out of contact with a supervisor (frequency of regular communication);
    - Identification of an effective method of communication that is related to the nature, specific type, and location of work for those who may require emergency assistance;
    - Documentation of when working alone is permitted and/or prohibited and ensure that it is effectively communicated to all workers.
  - Written Working Alone Plans will be reviewed and updated annually.

- **Low Risk Activity:**
  - Identify the risks or hazards associated with the work to be performed or the environment where the work is to be done;
  - Ensure sign-in and sign-out procedures are established and communicated;
  - Communicate the plan requirements for Low Risk Work Alone Plan.

### **Employee Responsibilities**

- Participate with the supervisor in the working alone risk assessment and risk management planning;
- Follow the safe work practices outlined by their supervisor and those practices specifically outlined in the working alone plan;
- Maintain regular communication as directed by supervisor;
- All employees must report situations, incidents, or near misses to their supervisor.

### **Communications Devices**

The High Risk Working Alone Plan may include the following to ensure the most practical and effective means of communication:

- Portable phone or cell phone;
- Walkie-talkie;
- Man down alarm;
- Buddy system;
- Check-in system and requirement for updating an individual's status while working alone; or
- Any other method that may be considered most effective to the specific department's safe operations.

Each working alone plan will use these communication options, either singularly or in combination, in the development of a site-specific working alone communication plan.

### **Mitigation of Risks**

This guideline was developed to deal with risks identified for employees who are required by the nature of their job to work alone or in isolation.

### **Methods to Minimize Risks for Employees Working Alone**

- Ensure the appropriate training has been completed with the worker;

- Ensure safe work procedures for working alone and in isolation are being followed;
- If required, all necessary equipment and supplies have been provided to the worker; and
- If required, a communication device has been provided to the worker.

### **High-Risk Work Alone Plan**

This plan applies to all Division employees, including administrators, teachers, Divisional staff and support staff (administrative assistants, technicians, education assistants, and casual employees).

- Administrators must prepare a working alone plan for staff working after 5:00 p.m. during weekdays, on weekends, or during the summer.
- All staff working after hours must have their supervisor's permission and a working alone plan prior to working.
- Support staff (administrative assistants, education assistants, technicians, and casual employees), teachers and administrators working alone in the school after regular hours or during the summer must have a means of communication (a cell phone or school based radio) so that they can contact the caretaker for help if they have a safety concern.
- When working during irregular hours it is the staff member's responsibility to ensure that they have a means of communication.
- If there is an urgent situation the worker should call 911.
- Staff must ensure their routines are known by immediate family members or friends and that their home arrival time has been shared in advance, and that their typical home arrival time is known.
- Staff must ensure that family members have a Division phone number to access in the case of an emergency (e.g. phone number of supervisor, principal, or Division office).
- Staff working after hours are **NOT** allowed to prop open outside doors or let family, friends, or members of the public into the building. If someone is at the door, the employee is to contact the school caretaker.
- If an employee is in severe distress and they believe they cannot wait for assistance or make a call on their own to 911 they should go to the nearest pull station and trigger the fire alarm.

### **Low-Risk Work Alone Plan**

- Ensure sign-in and sign-out procedures are established and communicated.

- When working during irregular hours it is the staff member's responsibility to ensure that they have a means of communication.
- Staff must ensure their routines are known by immediate family members or friends and that their home arrival time has been shared in advance, and that their typical home arrival time is known.
- Staff must ensure that family members have a Division phone number to access in the case of an emergency (e.g. phone number of supervisor, principal, or Division office).
- Staff working after hours are **NOT** allowed to prop open outside doors or let family, friends, or members of the public into the building. If someone is at the door, the employee is to contact the school caretaker.

### **Work Alone Procedure Specific to Maintenance and Custodial Staff Working After Hours.**

Following are the steps that must be documented:

1. When working alone after hours the employee is responsible for initiating the first call to Paladin Security 204-726-3575 to provide the following information:
  - a. Employee name;
  - b. Work location;
  - c. Estimated time that the employee will be at that school;
  - d. Employee contact number for period when they will be working alone.
2. Paladin Security Officer will then check on the employee by phone, for every hour that the employee is working alone. The employee must respond to these calls; if the call is not answered by the employee, Paladin Security will make three more attempts. If the call is still not answered by the employee, the Security Officer will go the site.
3. Employees must notify Paladin Security once work has been completed for the evening and/or to notify Paladin Security of a change in location.
4. If employee is moving to another location, both Paladin security and the employee must follow the same process as outlined above (items 2. and 3.).