

# UWEC 620.A, Working Alone Safely

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**Procedure #:** UWEC 620.A

## Intent

This procedure supports practice directive [UWEC 620, Working in Isolation](#). This procedure helps ensure the safety and well-being of individuals required and permitted to work alone is monitored through regular communication.

## Scope

This procedure applies to all faculty, staff, students and volunteers working alone or in isolation either on- or off-campus (including as a part of field research activities). The work being performed must be under the direction of an authorized member of the University community and the activity has the potential to result in exposure to hazardous materials or equipment, or to environments that pose a risk of injury or illness due to violence or unsafe conditions.

Working alone is prohibited under the following circumstances:

- [Permit-required confined spaces \(permit space\)](#)
- [Work on energized electrical conductor or equipment](#), including high energy materials (radioactive and/or high temperature) and high pressure or high voltage systems
- Power line hazards, including 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 contact the live power line
- While using [fall protection systems](#), including while using fall arrest equipment and scaffolding
- When the view is obstructed, including using a vehicle, crane, mobile equipment or similar material handling equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel

## Definitions

**Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP):** This refers to as the laboratory safety standard which specifies the mandatory requirements to protect laboratory workers from harm due to hazardous chemicals.

**Working Alone or Working in Isolation:** Individuals are working alone or in isolation when they cannot be seen or heard by another qualified individual, cannot expect a visit from another individual within a reasonable amount of time, and/or where assistance is not available when

needed.

**High Risk Activities:** Work that places an individual at an increased risk of physical or psychological harm, uses potentially dangerous machinery, or exposes the individual to a hazardous location or material.

**Risk Assessment:** A process that involves the identification of hazards, analysis or evaluation of the risk associated with the hazards, and the development of appropriate ways to eliminate or control the hazards.

## Procedures

- Understanding Responsibilities
- Developing a Working Alone Safety Plan
- Implementing & Following Best Practices
- Requesting Training

## Understanding Responsibilities

Many individuals have a shared responsibility for the safety and well-being of individuals required and permitted to work alone.

The **Department of Risk Management, Safety & Sustainability** is responsible for:

- Ensuring the development and implementation of this procedure,
- Providing necessary resources as available to carry out the program,
- Providing consultation to supervisory staff in the development of department- and site-specific working alone plans, and
- Assisting respective departments with conducting a risk assessment to identify the risks associated with potential hazards.

**Department chairs or directors** are responsible for:

- Providing the resources and direction required to support the Working in Isolation practice directive and this procedure,
- Ensuring that faculty, staff, students and volunteers are aware of and have been trained on the requirements for working alone,
- Using appropriate hazard controls, following your department's Chemical Hygiene Plan (CHP) and/or using the Working in Isolation eform for working alone, and
- Establishing general rules for working alone within the department or unit.

**Faculty and supervisors** are responsible for:

- Identifying situations where workers, including themselves, work alone and conduct risk

assessments accordingly with the proper mitigation measures,

- Identifying all workers who work alone or in isolation to ensure they know the associated risks,
- Ensuring workers attend required training programs to ensure their safety, and ensuring that all new workers that will work alone receive orientation,
- Ensuring procedures are developed, maintained and communicated to all workers that work alone,
- Ensuring work performed alone or in isolation has a completed risk assessment that has been shared with the lone worker,
- Ensuring lone workers understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out, and
- Implementing controls to eliminate or control hazards prior to lone work.

**Faculty, staff, students and volunteers** are responsible for:

- Obtaining supervisor approval before working alone,
- Communicating any unsafe conditions to the immediate supervisor,
- Recognizing the hazards associated with job tasks and mitigating the potential hazard,
- Working alone only when necessary and rescheduling assignments (when possible) to minimize working alone,
- Following the protocols put in place and adhering to safe work practices, and
- Communicating any changes in unsafe conditions or protocols.

# Developing a Working Alone Safety Plan

## Safe Working System

Departments and units are required to develop a methodical Safe Working System for individuals who work alone. Although there is no specific format for a Safe Working System, it should address the following information:

- Names of individuals or job positions that are required to work alone (complete the [Working in Isolation eform](#))
- Identification of which type of activities may be conducted while working alone and stating any limitations and/or prohibitions on certain activities
- Procedures to control (minimize) the identified risks. This will involve implementing engineering and/or administrative controls (see Control Measures for more information)
- Implementation of control measures to eliminate or reduce the risks of injury or harm, and assurance that they are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis
- Assurance that the worker understands the hazards that may be associated with the work

and the procedures that should be followed to reduce risk

- Any individual working alone should receive departmental permission prior to the occurrence. In the event the immediate supervisor cannot get in touch with the individual working alone, notify University Police immediately. The immediate supervisor must be notified of the situation in writing prior to its occurrence in case of an emergency.

## Communication

A Working Alone Safety Plan may include the following to ensure the most practical and effective means of communication:

- Methods of communication by which employees can secure emergency assistance and how emergency assistance will be provided in the event of an incident or accident
- A portable or cellular telephone and radio
- Walkie-talkies
- Email, instant message or text message
- Check-in system and requirement for updating an individual's status while working alone
- Any other method that may be considered effective in the specific department's safe operations

## Check-In Procedure

A check-in procedure is important to account for individuals who are working alone. Medium and high risk working alone activities should require that a check-in procedure be established. Consider the following factors when developing a check-in procedure:

- Determine who will be the main contact person and a backup individual. Ensure the designated contact person is willing to participate and knows the procedure if they are unable to contact you
- Determine if a verbal check-in is adequate or must the employee be accounted for by a visual check
- Define under what circumstances the lone employee will check in and how often
  - Ensure that the frequency of the communication increases as the risk of the activity increases
  - The schedule must be determined and clearly communicated to the lone worker and to the contact person
- Have the lone worker call the designated contact individual at the beginning and completion of the activity
- Have the contact person call or visit the lone employee periodically to make sure everything is OK. You may wish to have a written log of contact
- Develop an emergency action plan to be followed if contact with the lone worker is not achieved within a certain timeframe

# Implementing & Following Best Practices

There are many steps that should be taken to help ensure the safety of individuals who are working alone.

General best practices include:

- Assess the hazards of the work to identify existing or potential working alone hazards on campus.
- Take corrective actions or measures to prevent or minimize hazards or incidents from occurring.
- Assess the requirements for emergency equipment, emergency aid and practical means of obtaining assistance based upon the nature and degree of exposure to the hazard.
- Ensure emergency aid is available and compatible with the work assignment
- Train and educate individuals of the hazards and methods used to control, or eliminate them so they can perform their work safely.
- Evaluate safety measures on a regular basis to ensure that these measures are effective, considering any new changes in the operation.
- Provide an effective system of communication between any individual who works alone and a person capable of assisting the individual.

Best practices for individuals working alone include:

- Report all accidents of work site incidents immediately to University Police and your supervisor.
- Participate in work area hazard assessments and the implementation of procedures to eliminate or control hazards of working alone.
- Adhere to appropriate measures established for working alone.
- Follow all safety instructions provided.
- Report suspicious activity to University Police.

## Requesting Training

Training is available to those individuals in high-risk situations. The Department of Risk Management, Safety and Sustainability can help coordinate safety training to include raising awareness of potential dangers, avoiding and reducing risks, and dealing with emergency situations while working in isolation. Email [safety@uwec.edu](mailto:safety@uwec.edu) to arrange training.

## Resources

[Hazard Assessment Form for Laboratories](#)

[Practice Directive UWEC 620, \*Working in Isolation\*](#)

[Working in Isolation eform](#)

[Department of Risk Management, Safety & Sustainability website](#)

[UW System Risk Management website](#)

# Procedure Administration

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<b>Department</b>	<a href="#">Risk Management, Safety &amp; Sustainability</a>
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## Revision History

Version	Revision Date	Description of Change	Author(s)
1.0	September 29, 2022	Initial issuance	Chaizong Lor
2.0	January 20, 2023	Reformatted & reorganized content	Brian Drollinger