



Working Alone in the Laboratory

1. Purpose:

Provide precautions and guidance on working alone in research or teaching laboratories.

2. Scope:

Staff, Faculty, Postdoctoral Fellows and Graduate Students who have to work alone in a laboratory setting in the Department of Chemical and Physical Sciences (CPS).

Inexperienced workers and students should not work alone without supervision. Persons under the age of 18 and undergraduate students are not permitted to work alone with hazardous materials or hazardous equipment.

3. Prerequisites:

EHS101: WHMIS and Lab Safety (or Annual Refresher EHS112)

EHS002: Basic Health and Safety Awareness

EHS602: Biosafety Training (Only when required)

CPS Onboarding Training

*Not an extensive list. Confirm with PI, Supervisor or Manager.

4. Introduction: *(Taken Directly from UofT EHS Office)*

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, every reasonable precaution must be taken for the protection of a worker. Working Alone can be defined as working where assistance is not readily available should injury, illness or emergency occur. "Alone" situations can occur where the worker is out of visual or verbal contact, and contact cannot be expected from another person for a period of time. It includes working in physical isolation and can occur during normal working hours, evenings, overnight or weekends.

5. Responsibilities: *(Taken Directly from UofT EHS Office)*

5.1 Principal Investigators, Managers and Supervisors

Principal investigators, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that work conducted alone is approved before commencement and are responsible for reviewing any risk assessment conducted and hazard controls proposed.

The Principal investigator, Manager or Supervisor must also ensure the work procedures to mitigate the hazards are appropriately implemented.

5.2 Department

The department is responsible for ensuring that everyone is aware of the need to use this guideline when assessing work conducted alone.

5.3 Student and Staff that will be Working Alone

The person working alone is responsible for seeking approval from the Principal Investigator, Manager or Supervisor. The person working alone is also responsible for conducting and submitting to the Principal investigator, Manager or Supervisor a risk assessment for the activity including hazard controls and work procedures. (See Appendix A for Template)

6. Risk Assessment: *(Adapted from UofT EHS Office)*

Activities in the laboratory can be triaged into one of the following categories:

6.1 Low Risk

Low risk activities include office, desk or paperwork, as well as the use of low hazard instruments or low hazard/non-toxic materials.

No mitigation plan or safety template is required.

6.2 Moderate Risk

Wet lab work that does not involve highly hazardous materials or where those materials are being used in limited amounts or in a highly controlled environment.

It is recommended to have an individual nearby.

No mitigation plan is required. Communication with Campus Safety at (905)-569-4333 in the event of an emergency must be available.

6.3 High Risk

The activity involves the use of highly toxic, highly corrosive, pyrophoric or otherwise dangerous chemicals or the potential for fire or explosion. The danger must be immediate or acute rather than long term or chronic.

If work will be conducted alone, a working alone assessment that includes emergency procedures, risk mitigation, and check-in or buddy system must be conducted. A working alone safety plan (including emergency communications) should also be completed by the student or worker and approved by the Principle Investigator, Manager or Supervisor. (See Appendix A for Template)

7. Working Alone Service

Campus safety offers The Work Alone Program designed to create a safer environment for community members. Contact Campus Safety and provide your telephone number and location. Campus safety officers will conduct regular check-ins.

Campus Safety can be reached at (905)-569-4333.

8. Resources:

[Guidelines on working alone](#)

[Working alone guidelines](#)

Appendix A

Working Alone Safety Plan Template

Numbers to Call in the Event of Emergency (circle all that apply):

Campus Police 416-978-2222 OR at UTM 905-569-4333

Student name(s): _____

Lab room(s): _____

Principal Investigator Name: _____

Brief Description of Activity to be conducted. Note this may be general or quite specific.

Hazard presented by materials used and overall risk of the activity.

Mitigation to be used (for example personal protective equipment, buddy system, ventilation etc.).

Location of "buddy" on floor if applicable: _____

Phone number of "buddy", ideally cell phone if service is available: _____

Lab phone list as substitute: _____

PI cell and/or home phone: _____

Delegate cell and/or home phone: _____

Spill response 416-978-7000 (8am-4pm M-F only)

Departmental Emergency number (if applicable): _____

Plan is valid for:

A) Start date: _____

B) End date: _____

Optional link to calendaring system:

Authorizing Person Name and Signature (PI or delegate): _____

A copy of this completed form is to be kept by both the PI and by the student. The student should ensure a copy is readily available in case of emergency.