Working Alone Safety Policy

Intent:

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire is committed to providing a safe and healthy working and learning environment for individuals required to work alone. This policy helps ensure the safety and well-being of individuals permitted/required to work alone is monitored through regular communication methods as described in this policy and associated procedure.

Scope:

This applies to all faculty, staff, students and/or volunteers working alone or in isolation, both on and off campus, including field research activities, under the direction of an authorized member of the University community. In addition, this policy should be used where an 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.

Definitions:

Working Alone-Per OSHA: A person is "alone" at work when they are on their own; when they cannot be seen or heard by another person. It is important to consider all situations carefully. Working alone includes all employees who may go for a period where they do not have direct contact with a co-worker.

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.

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Procedures

The supervisor of individuals working alone should seek ways to reduce risk and eliminate or mitigate hazards a worker may face while performing their job duties. The procedures and guidelines for situations listed below should be followed by anyone working in an isolated environment.

Responsibilities

Risk Management, Safety and Sustainability (RMSS)

Step	Responsibilities
1	Be responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of this policy
2	Provide necessary resources as available to carry out the program
3	Provide consultation to supervisory staff in the development of departmental and site-specific working alone plans
4	Develop, modify, and update as required a standard working alone checklist to be used as the basis for documentation of objectives information concerning the specific working alone requirements
5	Assist respective departments to conduct a risk assessment to identify the risks associated with potential hazards

Department Chairs/Heads

Step	Responsibilities
1	Provide the resources and direction required to support the Working Alone Policy
2	Ensure that faculty, staff, and students are aware of, and have been trained on the requirements for working alone
3	Ensure that risk assessments have been conducted and appropriate controls put into place
4	Establish general rules for working alone within the department/unit

Faculty and/or Supervisors

Step	Responsibilities
1	Identify situations where workers, including themselves, work alone and conduct risk assessments accordingly
2	Identify all workers who work alone or in isolation to ensure they know the associated risks
3	Develop appropriate controls to mitigate risk at the individual and/or project level
4	Ensure workers attend required training programs to ensure their safety and that all new workers that will work alone receive orientation
5	Ensure procedures are developed, maintained, and communicated to all workers that work alone
6	Ensure work performed alone or in isolation has a completed risk assessment that has been shared with the lone worker
7	Ensure lone workers understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out
8	Provide guidance in situations of uncertainty
9	Implement controls to eliminate or control hazards prior to lone work

Employees, Students, and other persons

Step	Responsibilities
1	Obtain supervisor approval before working alone
2	Communicate any unsafe conditions to the immediate supervisor
3	Recognize the hazards associated with their jobs and how to minimize them
4	Work alone only when necessary, rescheduling assignments (when possible) to keep from working alone
5	Follow the protocol put into place and adhere to safe work practices
6	Advise of any change in conditions, circumstances or deficiencies in the protocol or safe work practices.

Working Alone Plan

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

Safe Working System

Step	Action
1	Name of individual or job positions that are required to work alone
2	Identification of the hazards and risks associated with the work activities and/or the environment where the work is to be performed
3	Assessing the risks of injury or harm arising from the hazards. This involves considering the chance or likelihood of a hazard occurring and, if it does occur, the extent of any injury or harm
4	Identification of which type of activities may be conducted while working alone and stating any limitations and/or prohibitions on certain activities
5	Procedures to control (minimize) the identified risks. This will involve implementing engineering and/or administrative controls (see Control Measures for more information)
6	Implementing control measures to eliminate or reduce the risks of injury or harm, and ensure they are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis
7	Ensuring the worker understands the hazards that may be associated with the work and the procedures that should be followed to reduce risk
8	Establishing the frequency of regular communications and identifying who is responsible for establishing contact
9	Any individual working alone should receive departmental permission prior to the occurrence. In the event the immediate supervisor cannot get in touch with the employee/student working alone, notify campus police or security right away. The immediate supervisor must be notified of the situation in writing prior to its occurrence. See **Permission of Work Alone Form**

Communication

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

Step	Action
1	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
2	Portable or cellular telephone and radio
3	Walkie-talkie
4	E-mail, instant message, or text message
5	Check-in system and requirement for updating an individual's status while working alone
6	Any other method that may be considered effective in the specific department's safe operations

Check-In Procedure

It is important to account for individuals who are working alone. Medium and high risk working alone activities will require that a check-in procedure be established. The following are factors to consider when developing a check-in procedure:

Step	Action
1	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
2	Determine if a verbal check-in is adequate or must the employee be accounted for by a visual check
3	Define under what circumstances the lone employee will check in and how often • 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
4	Have the lone worker call the designated contact individual at the beginning and completion of the activity
5	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
6	Develop an emergency action plan to be followed if contact with the lone worker is not achieved within a certain timeframe

Working Alone Prohibited

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

Step	Action
1	**Confined space entry**: 29 CFR 1910.146 • Permit-required Confined Spaces
2	Working on **energized electrical conductor** or equipment: 29 CFR 1910.330 • High energy materials (radioactive, high temperature) • High pressure or high voltage systems
3	**Power line hazards**: Use of a vehicle, crane, or similar equipment near a live power line where it is possible for any part or the equipment or its load to contact the live power line
4	**Fall Protection System**: 29 CFR 1910. 29 • Using fall arrest equipment and scaffolding

5	**Flammable Liquids:** 29 CFR 1910.106 • Toxic gases, liquids, or solids • Handling or transferring flammable liquids such as in oil and gas industries
6	**View obstruction**: A vehicle, crane, mobile equipment, or similar material handling equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel

Best Practices for Management

There are many steps that should be taken to help ensure the safety of those who are working alone. Best practices for a situation where individuals work alone include:

General Best Practices

Step	Action
1	Assessing the hazards of the work to identify existing or potential working alone hazards on campus.
2	Taking corrective actions or measures to prevent or minimize hazards or incidents from occurring
3	Assessing the requirements for emergency equipment, emergency aid and practical means of obtaining assistance based upon the nature and degree of exposure to the hazard
4	Ensuring emergency aid is available and compatible with the work assignment
5	Training and educating students of the hazards and methods used to control or eliminate them so they can perform their work safely
6	Evaluating safety measures on a regular basis to ensure that these measures are effective, considering any new changes in the operation
7	Providing an effective system of communication between any individual who works alone and a person capable of assisting the individual

Best Practices for Student/Employees

Step	Action
1	Report all accidents of work site incidents immediately to campus security and his/her supervisor
2	Participate in work area hazard assessments and the implementing of procedures to eliminate or control hazards of working alone
3	Adhere to appropriate measures established for working alone
4	Follow all safety instructions provided
5	Report suspicious activity to campus security

Training

Training is available to those staff in high-risk situations. Risk Management, Safety and Sustainability will coordinate safety training to include raising awareness of potential dangers, avoiding, and reducing risks, and dealing with emergency situations.

Related Policies:

UW-System Guidance for Working Alone: Working-Alone-Guidance-UWSA.pdf

UW-System Administrative Policy 620: Working in Isolation

Administration:

Approval Details

Approval Authority:	UW-System Guidance for Working Alone: Working-Alone-Guidance-UWSA.pdf UW-System Administrative Policy 620: Working in Isolation General Working Conditions: OSHA 1915.84 – Working Alone
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Revision History

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Contact Person/Department

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