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Occupational Health
and Safety

Santé et sécurité
au travail

Working Alone Directive

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Together, we make our workplaces and activities healthy and safe.

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SECTION 1 – PURPOSE

Environment Canada (EC) employees may, at any time, work alone in field locations, in office, at home (telework), and/or laboratory settings. The purpose of this document is to outline the minimal occupational health and safety procedures, equipment, practices and training required to effectively manage the risk to EC employees, other program participants and the public. Those requirements are subject to changes in relation to relevant legislation.

SECTION 2 – EFFECTIVE DATE

Date of Application

This directive becomes effective upon the date signed by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources.

Date of Last Revision

December 19, 2014

SECTION 3 – APPLICATION

This directive applies to employees, students, volunteers, and contractors who are performing authorized work on behalf of the department.

This directive applies to all EC workplaces. It is in conformity with the provisions of the *Canada Labour Code*, Part II, and the regulations in force, as well as with the Treasury Board (TB) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) occupational health and safety policies, standards, procedures and guidelines.

SECTION 4 – AUTHORITY

This directive has been developed by Environment Canada's Occupational Health and Safety Division, in consultation with relevant stakeholders to whom the directive applies. It is issued under the recommendation of Environment Canada's National Joint Occupational Health and Safety Policy Committee (NJOHSPC) and approved by the Assistant Deputy Minister, Human Resources.

SECTION 5 – DEFINITIONS

Base Camp (*Camp de base*) – Refers to temporary lodgings, such as a tent or cabin, where field-staff congregate, commence field operations and shelter. It does not include commercial accommodations, such as hotels or motels.

Check-in (*Appel de sécurité*) – Refers to a call or other form of contact by the employee to the manager or supervisor, on-call person, or third party provider to convey they are safe and on schedule as per the itinerary.

Communication Devices (*Dispositifs de communication*) – Examples include, but not limited to:

- Cellular Phones;
- Satellite Phone – a mobile phone that connects to orbiting satellites instead of terrestrial cell sites. Note: that these require the use of an area code, and therefore cannot access 911 services. Direct lines for local emergency services is required;
- Distress radio beacons, also known as emergency beacons, PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter) or EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon), are tracking transmitters which aid in the detection and location of boats, aircraft, and people in distress.
- Satellite Communication and Tracking Devices that utilizes GPS based messaging and emergency notification technologies (eg. SPOT and inReach); and
- VHF Radio: Very high frequency (VHF) is the ITU designation for the range of radio frequency electromagnetic waves from 30 MHz to 300 MHz, with corresponding wavelengths of ten to one meters.

COHSR (*RCSST*) – Refers to the Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations that enable the Canada Labour Code (CLC) Part II – Occupational Health and Safety. Links to relevant legislation can be found on EC's Intranet Site: Acts, Regulations, Policies and Programs.

Employee (*Employé*) – A person employed by Environment Canada (EC) who performs the specific task.

Extended Field Work (*Travail prolongé sur le terrain*) – Refers to any operations conducted in the field that require the use of a base camp* for overnight accommodation.

Field Work (*Travail sur le terrain*) – Any operations conducted outside of the office.

Hazard (*Danger*) –The potential of any machine, equipment, process, material (including biological and chemical) or physical factor that may cause harm to people, or damage to property or the environment.

Manager/Supervisor (*Gestionnaire ou superviseur*) – For the purpose of this Directive, the term “Manager” or “supervisor” means any person who directs the work of one or more employees who perform identified tasks

Remote Site (*Site éloigné*) – A remote area or site or an isolated work place means a work place that is more than two hours travel time from a hospital or other medical facility under normal traveling conditions using the fastest available means of transportation.

Note: In field situations where there is a possibility that local weather conditions or available means of transportation may hinder or delay the arrival of medical assistance or the evacuation of casualties, the field officer or project leader may consider such field sites to be remote.

Risk (*Risques*) – Is the chance or probability that a person will be harmed or experience an adverse health effect if exposed to a hazard. It may also apply to situations with property or equipment loss. Risk is a measure of potential loss that considers the severity (magnitude) of the loss and its probability (likelihood) of occurring.

Risk Analysis (*Analyse des risques*) – Risk analysis is the documented process where you:

- identify hazards,
- analyze or evaluate the risk associated with that hazard, and
- determine appropriate ways to eliminate or control the hazard.

Task Hazard Analysis (THA) (*Analyse des risques lies à la tâche (ART)*) – Consists of reviewing work methods, identifying known and potential hazards, including ergonomics and workplace violence, proposing control measures, personal protective equipment and training requirements in order to categorize the information for a type of work.

Working Alone (*Travail seul*):

To work alone at a field site, in an office, home (telework), warehouse or laboratory setting; and in other circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of an injury, illness or emergency.

NOTE: In order to define "readily available" the following 3 assessment factors must be evaluated:

- a) Awareness – will other persons capable of providing assistance be aware of the worker's needs?
- b) Willingness – is it reasonable to expect those other persons will provide helpful assistance? and
- c) Timeliness – will assistance be deployed within a reasonable period of time?

Refer to Labour Program “[Workers Working Alone at a Work Place Under the Control of the Employer - 905-1-IPG-059](#)” for additional information regarding the safety and health of workers working alone.

SECTION 6 – DIRECTIVE REQUIREMENTS

6.1 Work Situation Requiring a Minimum of Two (2) Personnel

6.1.1 Restrictions

Environment Canada employees must not work alone or be required to work alone when carrying out any of the following operations:

- a. Where a risk analysis determines that the potential risk of drowning is **medium to high**;

- b. Operations requiring entry into or work within a confined space (COHSR, Part XI and TBS / NJC OHS Directive Part XII);
- c. Operations involving diving or snorkeling (refer to Departmental Directive for Diving Safety, COHSR, Part XVIII);
- d. Operations involving the climbing of towers, ship masts, process stacks or other high-rise structures without fixed ladders;
- e. Operations involving technical climbing (use of mountain climbing equipment);
- f. Extended field work conducted in remote sites;
- g. Electrical systems (COHSR, Part VIII);
- h. Trenches (COHSR, Part III, s.3.12);
- i. A portable ladder that exceeds 6 meters in length and is not securely fastened, or work with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic (COHSR, Part III, s.3.11);
- j. The use of fall arrest equipment (COHSR Part XII, s.12.10) and scaffolds (COHSR Part III, s.3.10);
- k. Machine and power tools that could cause critical injury, e.g., lathes, table saws, and chain saws;
- l. Quick-acting acutely toxic material as described by the Material Safety Data Sheet, e.g., inorganic cyanides, fumigants, etc. (COHSR, Part X);
- m. The use of supplied air respiratory equipment or self-contained breathing apparatus (CSA Standard Z94.4-11);
- n. 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 (COHSR, Part VIII);
- o. Welding operations where a fire watcher is required (CSA Standard W117.2-12, Safety in Welding, Cutting, and Allied Processes);
- p. Handling of animals capable of causing critical injury or paralysis;
or
- q. Any other working alone situation identified in departmental health and safety manuals/guidelines or identified as medium to high risk by the responsible supervisor/manager through a risk analysis.

6.2 All Other Work Activities

For situations where **employees are required to work alone**, the responsible manager/supervisor **will conduct a written risk analysis** to ensure that the risk to the employee, under those circumstances in which they are asked to work alone, **is deemed low risk**. The only exception will be for routine office work during regular working hours, which has already been deemed low risk. They will do so in consultation with the employee(s) and with the Workplace Health and Safety Committee or Representative and implement a check-in procedure to track an employee's whereabouts to develop the most reliable and practicable means of providing the required emergency assistance, including first aid and rescue.

Where further advice or guidance is needed, please consult your [OHS Advisor](#).

SECTION 7 – RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Management/Supervisory Responsibilities

- a) Comply with all requirements of this directive;
- b) Assess risk associated with tasks to be conducted taking into consideration:
 - 1) Environmental conditions, such as geographic location, terrain and marine;
 - 2) Seasonal conditions, such as weather and wildlife;
 - 3) Work activities to be performed, including mode of transportation and all equipment and tools that will be required; and
 - 4) Communications device / radio battery power, opportunity to recharge, strength / existence of signal.
- c) Provide employees who work alone with a check-in procedure pursuant to Environment Canada's Safety Check-in Directive. Ensure that employees follow all Safe Work Procedures (SWPs) and regularly review all Task Hazard Analyses (THAs) for all tasks assigned;
- d) Provide employees with the necessary protective equipment, training, and information that is required to ensure their health and safety;
- e) Ensure that employees have an appropriate level of certified first aid training and access to a first aid kit;
- f) Ensure that employees have access to, and have been provided instruction on how to use, communication devices and location equipment;
- g) Ensure that employees have an up-to-date list of names, addresses and telephone numbers for local emergency services, such as emergency transportation (ambulance, taxi), health services, the fire department, the police and the poison control centre;
- h) Ensure that appropriate safety equipment is on board the vehicle.
- i) Keep up to date a confidential list of employee's personal emergency contact person(s) and phone number(s);
Important Note: This information is considered to be Protected A and must be stored electronically on a network drive, or if in hard copy, in a secure cabinet.
- j) Investigate all incidents and hazardous occurrences relative to this directive and complete a hazardous occurrence investigation report (HOIR).

7.2 Employee Responsibilities

- a) Comply with requirements of this directive, including notifying supervisor/manager of the date, time, location and duration of potential working alone situations;
- b) Comply with the appropriate Task Hazard Analysis(s) (THAs) and Safe Work Procedure(s) (SWPs) in addition to any trip specific instructions detailed by their supervisor;
- c) Participate in the necessary training to perform work safely;
- d) Wear/use approved personal protective clothing/equipment;
- e) Inform management without delay of any safety or health issue related to the work;
- f) Inform management without delay of any condition, medical or otherwise, that may pose a risk to you;
- g) Provide supervisor with up-to-date, prioritized emergency contact person(s) name and phone number(s);
- h) Use the appropriate communication equipment provided by the employer;
- i) Submit completed/detailed itinerary to the Supervisor/Manager for approval as per the Safety Check-in Directive.

SECTION 8 – GUIDELINES TO CONSIDER FOR WORK ALONE SITUATIONS

Many jobs have working alone situations. Employees and their managers/supervisors must work together to develop Safe Work Procedures. It is essential that the working conditions or circumstances that present moderate to high foreseeable personal safety risks be assessed so the probability of hazardous occurrence can be minimized.

The following risk factors for working alone should be considered:

- a) Tasks and associated hazards involved in the work to be performed;
- b) Consequences resulting from a “worst case” scenario;
- c) Likelihood for other persons to be in the area (Buddy System);
- d) Possibility that a critical injury or incident could prevent the employee from calling for help or leaving the workplace;
- e) Emergency response time;
- f) Worker’s training and experience;
- g) Worker’s physical abilities or medical conditions;
- h) Effects of implementing appropriate safeguards;
- i) Frequency of job supervision;
- j) The time or shift when the job is to be done (Could an alternate schedule be feasible);

- k) Whether the worker is accustomed to working alone; and
- l) Consideration of appropriate communication device and the availability of such of and training on how to use alternate communication devices.

SECTION 9 – REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Working Alone Directive, please feel free to discuss the matter with your [Senior OHS Advisor](#).

SECTION 10 – DIRECTIVE EVALUATION

- Will be initiated at the five-year mark of implementation of this directive and every five years thereafter by the OHS Division
- Will consist of consulting the Workplace OHS Committees and relevant stakeholders and recommend changes for improvement
- Evaluation will be done sooner if:
 - there are changes to legislation, directives or standards
 - an accident occurs which has preventative recommendations related to the Working Alone Directive
 - a suggested amendment to the program is received
 - significant changes occur in the workplace or in its systems/processes
 - there are recommendations from a Workplace OHS Committee

SECTION 11 – REFERENCES

Relevant Documents

- [Canada Occupational Health and Safety Regulations](#)
- [CSA Standards](#)
- [Risk Assessment and Hazard Prevention Program \(RAHPP\)](#)
- [Safety Check-In Directive](#)
- [Directive on Occupational Health and Safety \(Treasury Board Secretariat \(TBS\)/National Joint Council \(NJC\)\)](#)