

Protecting Workers Who Work Alone – Know the Laws of Your Province



You must do a hazard assessment and implement measures to ensure the safety of workers who work alone.

Workers are generally safest when they're with co-workers, supervisors and others who can provide help if they get into trouble or keep them out of trouble in the first place. Working alone increases the likelihood that injuries will occur and that they'll be more serious when they do. As OHS director, you need to protect these vulnerable workers; the migration of workers to the home in wake of the pandemic adds new urgency to this challenge. Here's what, if anything, each jurisdiction's OHS regulations say about protecting workers who work alone.

Protecting Workers Who Work Alone

FEDERAL

OHS regulations don't include special rules but government guidelines confirm that working alone or in isolation is a potential hazard including risk of workplace violence that employers must consider, in consultation with JHSC, based on the nature of the hazard, the remoteness of the location and how soon and effectively rescue and help can be delivered if worker gets in trouble [*Workers working alone at a workplace under the control of the employer*, 905-1-IPG-059, 2016]

ALBERTA

Under Sec. 393 of *OHS Code*, if worker is required or allowed to work alone or in isolation at a work site where help is 'not readily available' in an emergency or injury, employer must perform a hazard assessment and if a hazard is identified, take steps to eliminate or control it by:

- Providing an effective communication system consisting of: a. radio communication; b. landline or cellular telephone communication; or c. some other effective means of electronic communication that includes regular contact by the employer or a designate at appropriate intervals [Sec. 394(1)]
- If effective electronic communication isn't practicable at the work site,

employer must ensure that: a. the employer/designate visits the worker; or b. the worker contacts the employer/designate at appropriate intervals [Sec. 394(1.1)]

- Separate rules for retail workers who work alone at night and face risk of workplace violence

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Under Part 4 of the *OHS Regulation*, if worker is required or allowed to work alone or in isolation at a work site where help is 'not readily available in an emergency, injury or illness, employer must perform a hazard assessment and if a hazard is identified, take steps to eliminate or, if elimination isn't practicable, use engineering or administrative controls to minimize it to lowest level practicable before assigning worker to the work by:

- Developing and implementing a written procedure, in consultation with the JHSC or safety rep, for checking the worker's well-being, which lists time interval between checks and procedure to follow in case worker can't be contacted, including provisions for emergency rescue [Secs. 4.21(1) and (2)]
- Ensuring a person is designated to establish contact with the worker at predetermined intervals and at end of isolated workers shift and to record the results [Secs. 4.21(3) and (4)]
- Ensuring the worker who works alone is consulted in determining above time intervals [Sec. 4.21(6)]
- Ensuring a worker working alone or in isolation and any person assigned to check on the worker is trained in above written checking procedure [Sec. 4.22]
- Ensuring the above procedures and any applicable violence prevention procedures are reviewed at least annually, or more often in response to: a. a change in work environment arrangements that could adversely affect the effectiveness of the violence prevention program, or the worker's well-being or safety; or b. a report that the procedures, policies or work environment arrangements aren't working effectively [Sec. 4.23]
- Separate rules for gas station attendants and retail workers who work alone at night and face risk of workplace violence [Sec. 4.26]

MANITOBA

Under Section 9 of the *Workplace Health & Safety Regulation*, if worker is required or allowed to work alone or in isolation at a work site where help is not readily available in an emergency, injury or illness, employer must perform a hazard assessment, in consultation with the JHSC, safety rep or workers themselves if there is no JHSC or safety rep, and if a hazard is identified, take reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or reduce it by:

- Developing and implementing safe work procedures, training workers in and ensuring they comply with the safe work procedures [Sec. 9.3(1)]
- Ensuring safe work procedures include: a. the establishment of an effective communication system that consists of: i. radio communication, ii. telephone or cellular phone communication, or iii. any other means that provides effective communication given the risks involved; b. any of the following: i. a system of regular contact by the employer with the worker working alone or in isolation, ii. limitations on or prohibitions of

specified activities, iii. the establishment of training requirements; and c. if applicable, provision of emergency supplies for use in travelling or working under conditions of extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions [Sec. 9.3(2)]

- Posting a copy of the safe work procedures in a conspicuous place at workplace [Sec. 9.3(3)]
- Reviewing and revising the procedures at least every 3 years or sooner if circumstances at a workplace change in a way that poses a risk to a worker working alone or in isolation [Sec. 9.3(4)]

NEW BRUNSWICK

Under the *Code of Practice for Working Alone Regulation*, if worker is required or allowed to work alone or in isolation at a place of employment, employer must perform a hazard assessment and if a hazard is identified, implement a code of practice to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the worker's health and safety and must also:

- Ensure the code of practice lists: a. the name, address, location and telephone number of the place of employment; b. name, address, location and telephone number of the employer; c. the nature of the business conducted at the place of employment; d. identification of the possible risks to each employee who works alone that arise out of or in connection with the work assigned; e. the procedures to be followed to minimize identified risks; and f. details of the means by which an employee who works alone can secure emergency assistance and the employer can provide emergency assistance in case of injury or other circumstances endangering the worker [Sec. 3]
- Provide any equipment required in a code of practice established and ensure that the code of practice is followed at the place of employment [Sec. 4]
- Implement a training program on the code of practice for each employee who works alone at any time and for each supervisor who's responsible for an employee who works alone at any time [Sec. 6]
- Ensure that a copy of a code of practice is readily available to an OHS officer on request [Sec. 7]

NEWFOUNDLAND

Under Sec. 15 of the *OHS Regulations*, if worker is assigned to work alone or in isolation in circumstances where assistance would not be readily available to the worker in case of an emergency or injury or illness, employer must perform a risk assessment and if a hazard is identified, implement controls to eliminate it, or if elimination isn't practicable, minimize it by:

- Developing and implementing, in consultation with both the worker assigned to work alone or in isolation and the JHSC or safety rep, a written procedure for checking the worker's well-being [Sec. 15(4)]
- Ensuring the above procedure lists the time interval between checks and procedure to follow in case worker can't be contacted, including provisions for emergency response [Sec. 15(5)]
- Ensuring a person is designated to establish contact with the worker at predetermined intervals and that the person records the contact results [Sec. 15(6)]
- Ensuring the procedure is reviewed at least annually, or more frequently if there's: a. a change in work arrangements that may adversely affect a

worker's well-being or safety; or b. a report that procedures aren't working effectively [Sec. 15(8)]

NOVA SCOTIA

OHS regulations don't include special rules but working alone or in isolation is a potential hazard, including risk of workplace violence, based on the nature of the hazard, the remoteness of the location and how soon and effectively rescue and help can be delivered if worker gets in trouble

ONTARIO

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PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Under Sec. 53 of the *OHS Regulations*, if a worker working at a workplace is the employer's only worker at that workplace, in circumstances where assistance is not readily available to the worker in case of injury, ill health or emergency, the employer must develop and implement written procedures to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, and must also:

- Ensure that the written procedures include: a. the name, address, location and telephone number of the workplace; b. the name, address, location and telephone number of the employer; c. the nature of the business conducted at the workplace; d. identification of the possible risks to each worker working alone that arise from or in connection with the work assigned; the steps to be followed to minimize risks identified in clause (d); f. details of the means by which a worker working alone can secure, and the employer can provide, assistance in case of injury or other danger to the worker's health or safety [Sec. 53.2(2)]
- Ensure that the steps referred to in clause (e) above: a. specify the time intervals for checking on the worker; b. specify the person responsible for contacting the worker and recording the results of the contact; c. outline the process to be followed if the worker can't be contacted, including provisions for an emergency rescue; and d. provide for checking with the worker at the end of the worker's shift [Sec. 53.2(3)]
- Implement a training program on the above procedures for each worker working alone and for each supervisor responsible for a worker working alone [Sec. 53.4]
- Ensure that a copy of the above procedures is available to an OHS officer on request [Sec. 53.5]

QUÉBEC

Under Sec. 322 of the *OHS Regulation*, when a worker performs a task alone in an isolated environment where it's impossible for him to request assistance, an efficient means of surveillance, whether continuous or intermittent, must be installed

SASKATCHEWAN

Under Sec. 35 of the *OHS Regs.*, where a worker is required to work at a worksite as the only worker of the employer or contractor at that worksite, in circumstances where assistance is not readily available to the worker in case of injury, ill health or emergency, or at an isolated place of employment, an employer or contractor, in consultation with the JHSC, the safety rep or, where there's no JHSC or safety rep, the workers, must identify the risks arising from the conditions and circumstances of the worker's work or the isolation of the place of employment and take all reasonably practicable steps to eliminate or reduce the risks identified:

- Such reasonably practicable steps **MUST** include: a. establishment of an effective communication system that consists of: i. radio communication, ii. phone or cellular phone communication, or iii. any other means that provides effective communication in view of the risks involved [Sec. 35(3)]
- Such reasonably practicable steps **MAY** include any of the following: a. regular contact by the employer or contractor with the worker; b. limitations on, or prohibitions of, specified activities; c. establishment of minimum training or experience, or other standards of competency; d. provision of PPE; e. establishment of safe work practices or procedures; or f. provision of emergency supplies for use in travelling under conditions of extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions [Sec. 35(4)]
- Separate rules for retail workers who work alone at night [Sec. 37.6]

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES & NUNAVUT

Under Sec. 33 of the *OHS Regs.*, if a worker is required or permitted to work at a worksite as the only worker at that worksite, in circumstances where assistance is not readily available to the worker in case of injury, ill health or emergency, or at an isolated place of employment, an employer, in consultation with the JHSC, the safety rep or, where there's no JHSC or safety rep, the workers, must identify the hazards arising from the conditions and circumstances of the work and take all reasonable steps to eliminate or reduce the risks identified, including the establishment of an effective communication system that consists of: a. radio communication; b. phone or cellular phone communication; or c. any other means that provides effective communication considering the risks involved

YUKON

OHS regulations don't include special rules but working alone or in isolation is a potential hazard potentially including risk of workplace violence, that employers must consider based on the nature of the hazard, the remoteness of the location and how soon and effectively rescue and help can be delivered if worker gets in trouble