

Topic:	Working Alone
Effective:	September 2013
Cross-Reference:	Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act; Violence Prevention in the Workplace Administrative Procedure
Review Date:	September 2017, 2018, 2019, November 2020
Revision Date:	November 2021
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Human Resources

INTENDED PURPOSE:

The Halton District School Board's Working Alone Administrative Procedure was established to reduce the risk of injury from occurring while working alone and to ensure compliance with legislative requirements.

This procedure applies to all Board employees at all Board workplace locations.

All Board supervisors and employees are required to ensure the implementation of this safety procedure.

DEFINITIONS

Working alone is defined by situations where, during the course of employment, an employee is:

- in the workplace and does not have regular direct contact with co-workers and cannot be seen or heard by another person; and/or cannot expect a visit from another employee or member of the public, and/or
- travelling away from their regular workplace for work related purposes or as part of their regular duties.

Working alone is prohibited, according to Ontario Regulations, when work involves any of the following:

- Confined space entry. [O.Reg 851, RRO 1990, Sec. 69 (f)].
- An installation, equipment or conduction operating at a normal voltage of 300 volts or more, except while testing equipment or troubleshooting. An individual, who is able to recognize the hazards and perform rescue operations, including artificial respiration, will be available and able to see the worker performing the work. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 42.1]
- Electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 42.2]
- A portable ladder exceeding six metres or 18 feet in length and is not securely fastened, or works with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 73]
- Quick-acting acutely toxic material. [CSA Standard Z94.4-93, Sec. 9.3.3, 9.3.4]
- The use of supplied air respiratory equipment or self-contained breathing apparatus. [CSA Standard Z94.4-93, Sec. 9.3.3, 9.3.4]
- Use of a vehicle, 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. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 60]
- Use of a vehicle, or similar equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 56]

PROCEDURES:

1. Employees must work in compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
2. All employees are reminded to use personal protective equipment and clothing as required and to report workplace hazards and incidents to their supervisor.
3. All employees working alone in an HDSB facility outside the regular hours of the job/position (as outlined in their collective agreement) should ensure their immediate supervisor is aware the work is being done.
4. Employees with medical conditions or severe allergies that may require an emergency response are encouraged to inform their supervisor in order to establish a specific response plan when working alone.
5. No work that puts the employee at high risk for injury is to be conducted when working alone, (e.g, working on a ladder, in a confined space, at heights over 2 metres, with machinery, equipment or tools, and/or manual handling or transport of heavy loads). Employees who have received training from a certified trainer to operate equipment may use any equipment required to do their job when working alone.
6. Employees who handle money in schools should not keep large sums of money in isolated areas. Cheques and cash should be secured at all times in a vault or under lock and key.
7. Employees who do not feel safe meeting alone during scheduled appointments with members of the public (e.g., parents of students) can arrange for the attendance of an appropriate staff member (e.g., administrator) at the meeting.
8. Schedule meetings during times when the building is most populated. Set-up the meeting in a central, populated area of the building.
9. Work in isolated areas, where it is not a normal requirement of the job, is to be avoided unless someone knows you are there and there is a means of calling for assistance (e.g., phone/radio/PA).
10. It is suggested that no personal listening devices be used while working alone, as they compromise personal safety by eliminating or limiting the employee's ability to hear anyone or anything in the area.
11. Should an employee need immediate assistance when working alone the following options are available (provided the employee can reach them):
 - a. Use a phone or PA system to call the office
 - b. Call 9-1-1 from a landline within the building
 - c. Call 9-1-1 from a cell phone (if employee has one)

If the employee cannot access either a landline or cell phone, the fire alarm may be pulled as a last resort. This will activate the security system and emergency services will be dispatched. Fire alarm pull stations are located near the fire exits in the building.

The employee should report any incidents to their supervisor.

Working Alone – Before/After Hours

1. External security checks are to be done during daylight. After-daylight security check are to be done from the inside.
2. In evening and weekend hours, buildings should be secured (all doors locked) to prevent unauthorized entry. When the public is scheduled to use the building, doors should be unlocked 15 minutes prior to the event.
3. Employees should choose parking spots that are closest to the primary entrance that will be used by the employee. If this is not possible during business hours, move the car closer (during daylight hours) once other employees have left the building.

4. In case of emergency, suspicious activity or trespassers, call 9-1-1, your supervisor or the appropriate community emergency response.
5. When an employee arrives at any Board facility and there is indication of forced entry, suspicious activity, trespassers or the sounding of an intrusion alarm, DO NOT ENTER THE BUILDING. Call and wait for the police or the security company to arrive.
6. For employees who regularly work alone in the building, a safe area should be determined where employees may go to protect themselves and to report any suspicious behaviour or intruders in the building. The employee or employee group should determine this procedure with the immediate supervisor.
7. Garbage should be disposed of in the dumpster before dark, or while working with another person if dark, or the next morning.
8. Portables should be locked when not in use, after dark and after regular working hours. Employees who work in portable classrooms are encouraged to confine their work activities in their portable to regular school working hours. Employees should move into the main building when they may be working extended hours.
9. After hours/weekend use of school facilities by employees is permitted only with the permission/knowledge of the supervisor and it is recommended at least two adults should be present at all times in case of emergency.
10. Employees must avoid arguments and confrontation when working alone with members of the public (e.g., rental groups). If at any time a situation appears likely to escalate, employees should cease work, leave the area and immediately report it to their supervisor.
11. Safety Precautions such as walking around your vehicle and checking the back seat before unlocking the vehicle are recommended.
12. Should an employee need immediate assistance when working alone after hours the following options are available (provided the employee can reach them):
 - a. Call 9-1-1 from a landline within the building
 - b. Call 9-1-1 from a cell phone (if employee has one)

If the employee cannot access either a landline or cell phone, the fire alarm may be pulled as a last resort. This will activate the security system and emergency services will be dispatched. Fire alarm pull stations are located near the fire exits in the building.

All Halton District School Board facilities have an alarmed security system that must be activated by 1 a.m. If at that time the alarm is not activated, the monitoring centre will dispatch HARP Security to the site.

Working Alone – Home Visits

The HDSB recognizes there may be a need to support work with families by attending their residence.

1. In rare situations, employees may need to participate in a home visit. Home visits should not be the first option. Employees should try to arrange a mutually acceptable alternate location.
2. Employees who do not have access to a personal cell phone may request the use of a Board cell phone (with 911 capabilities only) during home visits. The employee must contact their supervisor to request a phone.
 - a. Once a phone has been requested, supervisors must contact the Health and Safety Specialist to complete the request.

- b. Phones must be returned to the Health and Safety Department when the employee ceases to do home visits as part of their job requirements or the Board no longer employs the employee.
3. Employees may refuse to proceed with a home visit if they feel unsafe, until an alternative plan is established.
4. At any time the employee can arrange for a second employee to accompany them to the home visit.
5. A review of the case files should be done prior to visit to identify any risks of violence (behaviours, triggers, etc). Appropriate measures should be taken, in consultation with the employee's supervisor if appropriate.
6. The employee should inform the supervisor or designated employee contact when they are leaving for a home visit. Identifying information such as name, address, telephone number, and time of appointment and time due back to office or to the next scheduled appointment should be given to the contact.
7. Employees should position themselves in the home so they are closest to the door for a quick exit in case there is a need to exit the home.
8. Employees are asked to be aware of their surroundings and personal safety. Use common sense, trust your instincts and if a situation feels dangerous or threatening – leave, saying for example that you need something from your car.
9. Immediately following the home visit, the supervisor or designated employee contact should be contacted to let them know the employee is safe, and to report details of any incidents that may have occurred.