

OPS-SOP-16	Revision #: 02	Implementation Date: 2019-08-28	Last Reviewed/ Update: 2021-01-21	Page #: 1 of 3
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Working Alone in the Laboratory

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.

1. Purpose: *to provide step by step guidance about precautions to take if you are working alone in the laboratory.*

2. Scope: *applies to all students, staff and faculty working alone in the laboratory.*

3. Prerequisites: *You must be trained by an experienced person in your lab or by Stores personnel.*

4. Responsibilities: *it is everybody responsibility to follow the SOP and take required actions in order to ensure safety.*

5. Procedure:

- Avoid working alone after business hours or during statutory holidays whenever possible
- Must obtain supervisors approval prior to working alone (please use this [template](#))
- Working alone/ after-hours approval MUST consider the individuals: experience level, hazards involved with the work, possibility of incident preventing an individual from being able to call for help, and accessibility to emergency assistance

- Conduct a risk assessment (refer to section 6 below) to identify hazards associated with working alone.
- Identify any hazards and take required actions to eliminate them if possible and ensure to minimize the risks
- Workers, students and other persons working alone should:-Follow the protocol/s put into place and adhere to safe work practices including wearing personal protection equipment (PPE)-Always let someone know that you will be working alone and ask that person to check on you regularly. Refer to "working alone service" described on page 3 and use this service.
- If an emergency occurs, immediately contact campus police (8-2000), if critical personal injury or unsure call 911. For more information refer to the [Emergency Response SOP](#)
- In case of spills; follow the chemical spills SOP [HERE](#) for detailed instructions.
- As soon as it is possible, following an incident, email the DOTS(grace.flock@utoronto.ca) indicating room # and a brief description of any issues that occurred. In addition, inform your supervisor.

6. Risk Assessment:

HIGH RISK – DO NOT WORK ALONE

Examples of High Risk activities

- Hot work where a fire watch is required
- Work with pyrogenic chemicals
- Open flame associated with flammable solvents
- Work with acutely toxic material (e.g. cyanides, fumigants, hydrofluoric acid) as described in Safety Data Sheet (SDS)
- Other tasks which based on hazard analysis is deemed to require more than one person for safety reasons

MODERATE RISK – RECOMMENDED TO HAVE AN INDIVIDUAL NEARBY

Examples of Moderate Risk activities

- Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs
- Radioactive materials (above exempt quantities)
- Large volumes of chemicals
- X-rays

- Exposed, energized electrical systems

LOW RISK – INDIVIDUALS CAN WORK ALONE

Examples of low risk activities

- Routine office work or study
- Laboratory work with minimal risk (analytical equipment, monitoring equipment or process, work not involving hazardous materials)

For more information, please review the University of Toronto's [Guidelines on Working Alone in the Laboratory](#).

*Adapted from; University of Waterloo [Working Alone Guideline](#) Prepared by Maya Batey.
Reviewed by Grace Flock, Director of Operations and Technical Services (DOTS). Aug-2019*