

The Dangers of Working Alone

A Risk Pool Member authorized an employee to begin work two hours early. Working alone, the employee attempted to change the blades on a brush hog shredder- a task requiring two people. When coworkers arrived, they found the employee pinned beneath the equipment. Because no one was there to recognize the emergency or provide assistance, the employee tragically suffocated before help could reach him.

Many employees routinely work alone, including those inspecting facilities, maintaining parks, reading utility meters, responding to service requests, or working outside normal business hours. While many tasks can be performed safely alone, others may require a second employee or additional safeguards. Supervisors should consider not only whether an employee can perform a task alone, but also what could happen if something goes wrong.

1

Identify High-Risk Tasks. Activities involving confined spaces, electrical hazards, hazardous materials, work at heights, heavy equipment, or remote worksites may also require additional planning, a second employee, or alternative controls.



2

Evaluate the Risks Before Starting. Assess the task, location, equipment, communication options, environmental conditions, and how quickly help could arrive. Consider whether staffing or scheduling changes could result in an employee unexpectedly working alone.



3

Communicate Expectations. Before work begins, discuss the hazards, required controls, and emergency procedures. Encourage employees to stop work and immediately report unsafe conditions, near misses, and incidents.

4

Maintain Regular Contact. Establish a reliable check-in process using scheduled calls, radios, GPS or other monitoring technology, or supervisor check-ins. Establish a clear procedure for responding to missed check-ins or other indications that an employee may need assistance.



5

Provide the Right Resources. Provide task-specific safety training and reliable means for employees to communicate or request assistance. Consider technology that can support lone worker safety.

LEARN MORE WITH THESE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Safety + Health [Lone Worker Safety](#)
- TDI [Lone Worker Safety Fact Sheet](#)
- TDI [Wearable safety technology: Revolutionizing workplace safety](#)
- CCOHS [CCOHS: Working Alone - General](#)
- CCOHS [CCOHS: Working Alone - Offsite](#)