

MAFES Dawg Tracks

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MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND
FORESTRY EXPERIMENT STATION

Working Alone

A big part of safety on the job is watching out for each other. But what if you work alone? What if, as a supervisor, you send an employee off to perform a job task alone? Regardless, there is a responsibility to protect workers whether they're surrounded by colleagues or alone on an assignment.

A lone worker could be someone out checking desolate forest roads, someone on a tractor in a back pasture, someone coming into the office/lab at night when the building is not occupied by others, or even traveling workers that are away from their home base.

While performing work using at least the “buddy system” is always best, it is not always possible. The following tips can help make working alone or in an unfamiliar environments safer.

As a supervisor...

- Conduct a risk assessments to determine if work may be done safely by lone workers.
- Ensure the lone worker is very qualified and has experience in the task being performed.
- Set limits for what is permissible during lone work.
- Train lone workers on emergency response & establish a clear action plan in the event of an emergency.
- Provide information on high risk geographical areas if travel there is required.
- Know your lone worker's daily plan, including where they will be when.

- Ensure regular contact through periodic visits or via phone/ radio contact.
- Verify that lone workers have returned to fixed base or home after completing a task.

As a lone worker...

- Do not enter any situation, location, or perform a task where you feel threatened or unsafe.
- Tell your supervisor about any feelings of discomfort or apprehension about an upcoming job task, meeting, or travel arrangement.
- Prepare a daily work plan so everyone knows where and when you are expected somewhere. Share this with your supervisor and family member/friend.
- If traveling, be aware of potential weather conditions & effects it could have.
- Be prepared – have correct tools needed, personal protective equipment, 1st aid kit, etc. on hand.
- Always take your cell phone with you and keep it in a place you can access quickly.
- Be alert and observant of your surroundings at all times.

Certain work should NOT be done alone...

- In labs with hazardous chemicals or high risk experiments.
- At heights.
- In confined spaces (such as tanks, grain bins or elevators, culverts, etc.).
- With electricity.
- With hazardous substances or materials.

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Sources:
<http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/12628-lone-worker-safety>
https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/workingalone_offsite.html