



WORKING ALONE POLICY & GUIDELINES

St Pius X High School, Adamstown

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to minimise, as far as practicable, risks associated with working at St Pius X High School, Adamstown when working alone. When working alone, the risks of certain hazards may be increased due to the reduction of immediate assistance in the event of an incident.

Scope

This policy applies to all work carried out in general work areas, workshops, computer rooms and grounds, undertaken at St Pius X High School, Adamstown, outside normal working hours and when working alone.

All staff, part-time, casual, cleaners and groundsperson(s) are covered by the policy requirements when working alone.

Definition

Working Alone – a worker can be considered to be working alone if there is a reasonable expectation that a call for assistance will not or cannot be responded to and the worker's absence may not be noticed for some time. Risks to workers may be higher when they are working alone. A fall, exposure to dangerous chemicals or an assault can have very different consequences if a worker is alone than if the victim has a co-worker(s) or capable assistants in the immediate vicinity. The degree of risk will determine the level of protection the worker needs.

Responsibilities

Compliance with this Working Alone Policy and the implementation of the following procedures is the responsibility of the Principal and members of the School Executive. Staff are responsible for taking all reasonably practical steps to ensure their own safety and security when working alone. This includes following the requirements of these guidelines and any additional procedures deemed necessary.

Procedures Regarding Working Alone During Normal School Hours

Staff who must work alone as defined above during part or all of the school day:

1. Must do a risk assessment (see Appendix) to determine the nature and extent of risks posed by working alone in their particular work situation and must put in place appropriate control measures to keep themselves safe.
2. Must have quick access to a mobile phone with which they can call a co-worker, the Main Office or relevant Emergency Services direct. Cleaners and Maintenance and Groundstaff are supplied by the school with mobile phones for this purpose.
3. Must inform their direct Supervisor (Office Manager, Coordinator, etc) or another appropriate staff member of the nature, location and timing of the work alone situation.

4. Must take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety while working alone. This includes only operating such equipment or machinery as they are qualified and experienced to use and that is safe to operate by one person.

Note that Staff should generally not work alone:

1. In workshops where hazardous substances are handled or housed and where there is a significant risk of injury or exposure to the hazardous substances being used.
2. In areas where power tools or hand tools that could cause injury are used.
3. In areas where moving machinery is used.
4. Whenever any high risk hazards exist.

Where it is necessary, however, for staff to work alone in such areas, the Principal should ensure that staff are fully qualified and trained in the use of hazardous substances and equipment, and put appropriate mechanisms into place to ensure that staff comply with this requirement. Any equipment identified as requiring a two-person operation for safety reasons, must not be operated by one person.

Common work alone situations where employees may be at risk include:

- Employees who handle cash and are at the front line for visitors.
- Employees who perform hazardous work or operate powered equipment in isolation to others (ie workshops, grounds sheds) and who have no regular interaction with other employees. Maintenance, Grounds and Cleaning staff are often in this situation.
- Employees who are at risk of violent attack because they are isolated from other workers or public view and perhaps work early morning or late afternoon/evening. Maintenance, Grounds and Cleaning staff are also often in this situation. Hence, the importance for these workers to have quick access to a mobile phone and to inform on-site co-workers of their work plans during such times.

Procedure for Working Alone Outside Normal School Hours

Normal school hours at St Pius are 7.30am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday inclusive.

Staff who work alone outside normal school hours:

1. Must do a risk assessment (see Appendix) to determine the nature and extent of risks posed by working alone in their particular work situation and must put in place appropriate control measures to keep themselves safe. This risk assessment must be signed by the relevant supervisor (Office Manager, Coordinator, etc).
2. Must have quick access to a mobile phone with which they can call a family member, friend, co-worker or relevant Emergency Services direct. Cleaners and Maintenance and Groundstaff are supplied by the school with mobile phones for this purpose.
3. Must inform their direct Supervisor (Office Manager, Coordinator, etc) or another appropriate staff member (eg a Cleaner) of the nature, location and timing of their working alone situation. Access to keys and instructions on how to operate the security alarm system can be discussed at this stage.
4. Must inform an appropriate family member or friend of the nature, location and duration of their working alone situation. The staff member should phone

this person on arrival at school and when they are leaving the school. If a long stay at school is anticipated the staff member should arrange to contact this person at regular intervals during the stay (eg every 2 hours).

5. Must carry some form of identification.
6. Must take all reasonable steps to ensure their safety while working alone.
This includes:
 - a. Locking school gates and doors behind them to reduce the likelihood of intruders.
 - b. Signing in on arrival and signing out before leaving in the Work Log Book on OneDrive. Open the book on arrival, sign in and close the book. Do the same before leaving to sign out. By using this procedure staff can be aware of who else is on-site at the time they sign-in.
 - c. Only operating such equipment or machinery as they are qualified and experienced to use and that is safe to operate by one person.
 - d. Locking doors and gates and turning on security alarms when they leave the school to ensure that the school is left secure after their visit. Hence the need to sign-out in the Work Log Book and check if they are the last to leave before setting alarms.
7. All other school policies apply throughout the working alone situation.

Note: No individual, who has a medical condition that may give rise to a life threatening situation, may work alone or outside normal school hours without notifying his or her supervisor (Office Manager, Coordinator) and the Principal of the condition.

High Risk Activities

Working alone or out of normal school hours is not permitted when any high risk hazards exist (as assessed using the St Pius WHS Risk Management Tool). High risk hazards, which may be encountered include but are not limited to:

- Operating equipment or machinery, including workshop machinery capable of inflicting serious injury, such as lathes and power saws*
- Working with, or near, highly toxic or corrosive substances where there is a significant risk of exposure to the substance, taking into account the volume used
- Using apparatus that could result in explosion, implosion or the release of high energy fragments or significant amounts of toxic or environmentally damaging hazardous material
- Climbing high ladders (above 1 metre)*
- Working on any electrical installation or equipment.
- Operating lasers of Class 3 and above
- Working with significant volumes of flammable substances
- Welding

* Note that in this case, if a thorough and accurate risk assessment of the particular task to be performed indicates that the risk involved is less than “high”, the task may be performed, providing that all other aspects of the Working Alone Policy are followed.

Evaluation

This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed and evaluated every five years by the School Executive or earlier if the need arises. Changes will be made when & where appropriate and will be communicated promptly to staff.

APPENDIX

RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The risk factors that need to be assessed by supervisors (Office Manager, Coordinators, Assistant Principals and/or Principal) and workers before granting a person permission to work alone or to work outside normal school hours include:

- Suitability of the individual (physical, mental and work experience) to work alone
- Nature and condition of any equipment, tools or items to be handled
- Presence and handling of dangerous substances e.g. toxic chemicals, flammable liquids, corrosive substances, explosive substances
- Work environment – remoteness, effect of weather conditions for external tasks, possible unprovoked violence due to presence of unwanted persons
- Emergency arrangements, particularly the summoning of assistance for first aid
- Communication systems – use of mobile telephone, pager, two-way radio etc.

Person's Suitability

The medical condition of the individual, including any disability, however minor such as impaired hearing or sight, may rule out working alone. The ability of the individual to deal with foreseeable injury accidents, fire and periods of personal isolation needs to be assessed.

Machinery, Equipment, Materials or Handled Items

Particular attention needs to be given to work involving dangerous machines, electrical safety, hazardous and dangerous substances and manual handling.

Environment

Safe access to the work area is important so that adequate illumination is provided day and night. The security arrangements to control the possible access of unwanted persons need to be considered. The remoteness of the work area may be such that emergency response would be unacceptably delayed.

Emergency

Where emergency facilities are inaccessible, for example working in remote locations, lone workers should be trained to use and be provided with a first aid kit. In certain situations, the use of personal alarms may be appropriate.

Communications

The lone worker may wish to report to a supervisor or designated responsible person such as security staff on a regular basis to confirm his/her well being. This could be done using an internal phone, mobile phone or pager at regular intervals or at an agreed frequency that is varied according to the risk of particular tasks. Such arrangements provide a means to summon aid in an emergency.

Supervision

Although lone workers cannot be constantly supervised, there is a duty on the School to provide appropriate control of the work. In addition, information, training and instruction needs to be provided to ensure the risks are understood by the lone worker and the necessary safety precautions are carried out.