



**FARM SAFETY ASSOCIATION INC.  
FACTSHEET  
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## **The Lone Worker!**

Sorry this tale doesn't speak of cowboys or horses, there is no glamorizing working alone when it comes to landscaping, traditional farming or horticulture work. Often times, working alone is not by choice but rather, because there is no other reasonable alternative when seasons are short, days are long and assistance is scarce. While some tasks performed are inherently designed to be performed alone, using landscaping equipment or tractor operation for example, other tasks should intrinsically be done with others to improve the level of personal safety, as well as others'.

Working alone may result in injury, health impairment or victimization through criminal violence or other adverse conditions. Employers should provide and implement a plan to ensure, as far as reasonably practical, safety of the worker from risks arising out of workplace activities are prevented. This aside, consider your day and the activities you perform. Now consider the number and ways you work independently throughout your day. If mechanical break down were to occur or operational assistance is required who is able to assist you and by what means do you have of communicating to them? Who would be able to assist you if medical attention was required? Who would be able to provide, first aid, CPR or call a paramedic, if by chance something ill fated were to happen? Often times when we hear about accidents related to landscape, agriculture or horticulture operations, the circumstances could have considerably improved, if emergency or even casual help was there to attend the needs of the victim before the situation had escalated.

**There are many feasible practices you can do everyday, which can benefit everyone, in your workplace. Control measures should include;**

- A clear and concise working alone policy
- Instruction and training on working alone practices to all staff
- Appropriate supervision
- And by providing staff with communication equipment such as cell phones, pagers, calling cards or two-way radios.

### **Things to think about**

- Are there safe working arrangements for lone workers?
- Can one person adequately control the risks of the job?

- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
- What training is required to ensure competency of staff?
- How will the person be supervised?
- What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?

Work of a clearly hazardous nature, i.e. tasks involving high-energy sources whether electrical, mechanical, pneumatic, toxic, reactive, flammable or while using highly pressured materials should never be conducted alone. It should go without saying that confined space work should never be conducted alone either. Transversely work which is considered a low risk environment, such as administration or clerical work, should have time limitations placed on it, to ensure employee accountability as well as personal safety.

From a supervisor's perspective, the notion of "checking up" on others can be done by a simple walk around, a standard inspection, a phone call, prearranging a meeting at certain breaks, or by using paging or two-way communication devices. As an employee, any time, work is assigned to be completed alone, ensure a conscientious effort is made on your part to regularly "check-in" at appropriate intervals. Check-ins may be visual or by phone. Appropriate checks should include, timed intervals throughout the day, such as lunchtime, coffee breaks or end of work shift check-ins.

Working alone safely can mean happy trails for you, until you..... meet again!

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