

## WORKING ALONE/AFTER-HOUR AND EVENT RESPONSE GUIDANCE

### Purpose:

To provide reasonably practicable procedures that Auburn University Samuel Ginn College of Engineering research groups or units will use to ensure the safety of individuals who perform work alone or after hours in a potentially hazardous environment or with hazardous materials or equipment on campus.

### Scope:

This guidance applies to all individuals (faculty, staff, and students) whose task or activities involve working by themselves or after hours and 1) their activity or task has the potential to cause harm, injury, or damage to person(s) and/or property. The tasks or activities may involve, but are not limited to:

1. use of highly hazardous materials (chemical, biological, radiological, etc.)
2. use of heavy machinery, hazardous equipment, processes, and hazardous energies (electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, thermal, etc.)
3. work in isolated environments.

2) they can find themselves in situations where there is an anticipated risk of physical assault or harassment from others (either invited or uninvited) to their workspace

### Definitions:

- **Buddy System:** This term means pairing a group of individuals together to ensure that each person working in an area or space is being observed by another person to provide immediate assistance should an incident occur. The buddy system requires an adequate level of competency by both individuals on the agreed activities being carried out.
- **Working Alone:** An individual is considered as "working alone" if the individual is working by his/herself in isolation such that assistance is not readily available should some injury, illness or emergency arise.
- **Alone:** Interpreted as being out of visual contact with another person for more than a few minutes. It includes working in physical isolation (e.g., as the sole occupant of an area or during a site sampling activity, where no other person is in the vicinity). It is possible for a worker to be on the same floor of a building or even in the same general area as others yet be working alone.
- **After Hours:** The period when "normal" university operations cease.

### Responsibilities:

Supervisor/Principal Investigator (PI):

- Approve personnel to conduct work alone or after-hours.
- Create a work alone plan for your group/unit and identify materials or activities which should not be handled alone or after-hours.

- Provide research/project specific training to laboratory personnel to be competent with working alone or after-hours.
- Establish a call-tree and ensure individuals are familiar with Auburn University's emergency contacts.

Laboratory/Technical Area Users:

- Obtain supervisor or PI approval before working alone or after-hours.

#### References:

- Auburn University Minors on Campus Policy
- Auburn University Laboratory Safety Manual
- Auburn University Machine Shop Safety Manual
- Auburn University Field Trip Guidelines

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

Working alone and/or after-hours should be avoided when handling hazardous materials, using heavy machinery, equipment, hazardous energies or performing hazardous procedures in isolated environments. A buddy system should always be practiced when working in the laboratory or shop. However, if working alone/after-hours work cannot be avoided, all Samuel Ginn College of Engineering faculty, staff and students supervising activities that may result in individuals working alone/after-hours:

1. should identify materials, processes or equipment that should and should not be handled while working alone or after-hours.
2. are recommended to create a working alone/after-hours plan using this guidance document as a template to document their approval for someone to work alone in their laboratory or shop. Faculty and Staff can also submit the plan to the college of engineering safety manager for review.

#### WHO CAN WORK ALONE?

- High School Students/Minors: This group is not permitted to work alone in a research lab, shop, or studio even with non-hazardous materials. They must always have a mentor/supervisor present in the research laboratory, shop, or studio always and are not permitted to conduct high hazard activities. Review the [Youth Protection Policy](#) for additional information, including the requirements for "Qualified Supervisor".
- Undergraduate Students: This group is not permitted to work alone with hazardous materials or equipment. They must use the "buddy system". If working alone is required, they must obtain the approval of the PI and there must be someone who has completed

all required safety training in the lab or adjacent to the lab and is capable of checking on their safety. While working alone, they are not permitted to conduct high hazard activities.

- Graduate Students, Postdoctoral Fellows, Research Engineers/Scientists, Technicians and Principal Investigators: This group is considered full time laboratory or shop workers, and laboratory or shop work is integral to their professional training. They have completed applicable training related to their laboratory or shop work. They are permitted to work alone in a research laboratory, shops, or studios after approval by the PI and following the lab's safety protocol for working alone. They should consider using the “buddy system” when working in the laboratory or shop during the night and over the weekend.

## **STEPS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING A WORKING ALONE OR AFTER-HOURS PLAN**

### **1. Identify individuals approved to work alone/after-hours**

- What is the individual’s level of experience with materials or activity?
- Are there any physical or health limitations that may increase the risk of working alone or after-hours?
- What is the individual’s ability to self-rescue in an emergency?
- What is the individual’s level of experience and has all applicable training been completed?
- Will the individual be able to make sound judgments about their safety and tasks performed?

### **2. Type or nature of the task performed alone/after-hours**

- Have the hazards associated with the type and nature of task or material been identified?
- Have appropriate risk reduction or control measures been implemented (shielding, safe work procedure, personal protective equipment, etc.)?
- If personal protective equipment is required, is it available, is it in good condition, and has the individual been trained in its use, care, and storage?
- Is there adequate training and instruction provided for the individual to be able to work alone safely?
- What machinery, equipment and tools will be used and what are the risks associated?
- Are any high-risk activities involved?
- Is fatigue likely to be a factor when working alone or after-hours?
- Are there extreme temperatures, high pressures, or energy sources that could cause harm involved with the activity when working alone or after-hours?
- If the individual is working inside a locked building, how will emergency services be able to get in?
- If traveling is involved, will the individual be traveling alone?

### **3. Duration of work alone or after-hours**

- What is the length of time the individual will be alone?

#### 4. Mode of communication while alone or after-hours

- What forms of communication are available for the individual (e.g., cellphone, landline phone, walkie-talkie, personal alarm or pager, buddy system, check-in system) to meet the requirement for updating an individual's status while working alone, and to report on established check-in times?
- Will the means of communication work at the time of an emergency?
- Will the individual be able to use the communication system in an emergency?
- If a buddy system or check-in system is chosen, will the designated assistance or buddy system for the work group or unit be willing to stay or check-in for the established duration of the task within a reasonable period?

#### 5. Location of work

- Is the work in an isolated location? (An isolated location does not have to be far away. Storage rooms that are rarely used can be considered isolated.)
- What is your emergency response plan should an emergency occur?
- Does the area have access restrictions that might delay response or provide security to individuals after-hours?
- How safe is the area working and what security is available when leaving the area of work after hours?
- Are there situations that may expose the individual working alone to potential physical assault, harassment, and threats?
- Will individuals working alone know how to behave or have resources to protect themselves when a violent incident occurs or are confronted by a violent person?

Recommended trainings and information to consider when developing your working alone plan:

- [Risk Management and Safety Trainings](#)
- [Campus Safety Workplace Violence Prevention and Active Shooter training](#)
- [Safe Harbor](#)
- [Auburn University Emergency Guidelines](#)

#### NOTE

- It is recommended that Auburn University Samuel Ginn College of Engineering personnel engaging in off-campus activities familiarize themselves with these guidelines as well as the Auburn University Field Trip Guidelines.

#### APPENDIX

Working Alone or In Isolation Check-In Form