

Working Alone in Construction

In construction, situations sometimes develop where people must work alone. The work location may be in a populated area or in a remote area. The greatest risk to working alone is that no one is available to assist if the lone worker becomes sick, injured, entrapped, or unconscious. Even when other people realize that someone is missing, it may be difficult to locate the incapacitated person. Planning and communication become critical components to the success of the operation. Here is a checklist of issues to consider when preparing to work alone.



Planning

- Before starting, determine if there is a better way to accomplish the remote task.
- Inspect the jobsite to identify and eliminate any potential or actual hazards.
- Provide any needed personal protective equipment, and instruct the worker(s) in its correct use.
- Provide any needed protective clothing, and instruct the worker(s) in its correct use.
- Review all safety and work related procedures with everyone involved.
- Establish a system that requires the remote worker to check in on a scheduled basis.
- Establish a response procedure to follow should a problem develop. Practice a response.

Communication

- Establish a method of checking on the remote worker(s).
- Be sure that the check-in schedule is clearly understood by everyone on both ends.
- Make sure all communication equipment is in good working order.
- If contact is made by two-way radio or cellular phone, make sure the transmission is not impaired.
- If contact is made by telephone or cellular phone, post the contact person's number.
- Be sure that the contact person understands the hazards of the work and schedule.
- Be sure that the contact person knows how to respond if a problem develops.

Common sense will help to determine whether a job should be done by someone working alone.