Administrative Procedure 412
Working Alone

Limestone District School Board is committed to providing a safe work environment for its employees. In doing so, the Board will take all reasonable and practical measures to eliminate or minimize injury or incident risks associated with the nature of the work performed when employees work alone. The intent of this procedure is to protect workers who are working alone and to enable them to summon immediate assistance in the event of an emergency. Potential violence hazards that exist for employees who work alone are addressed in Administrative Procedure 407: Violence in the Workplace.

Working alone refers to working alone in our schools or other Board-owned facilities, at any time, where assistance is not readily available from a co-worker or expected from a member of the public when needed in the normal course of duties or in the event of an injury, illness or emergency while working on school board property.

As such, the following is intended to promote and maintain the safety of staff working alone in our schools, or other board-owned facilities.

1. Responsibilities

1.1. Principals and managers/supervisors will:

- Communicate this procedure to employees who work alone.
- Develop and maintain site specific signage in processes and records.
- Conduct a hazard assessment to identify existing or potential hazards related to the nature of the work or the work environment given the circumstances of the work when working alone.
- Take all reasonable and practical steps to minimize or eliminate identified injury or incident risks.
- In cases where hazards are identified, establish an effective means of

communication between the employee and persons capable of responding to the employee's needs.

- Identify, document and communicate any work operations that are not to be performed by employees who are working alone (see Appendix A for examples).

- Consult with JHSCs in conducting hazard assessments, investigating incidents and developing practical steps to minimize or eliminate identified risks. (Examples of potential steps to minimize or eliminate identified risks are provided in Appendix B).

- Conduct further hazard assessments at intervals of time appropriate to the changing conditions and circumstances of the worker's job (e.g., changes in work organization, physical environment or equipment and tools).

- Annually review the effectiveness of the hazard controls and procedures and make improvements as required.

1.2. The Superintendent of Human Resources, or designate, and the Health and Safety Coordinator will:

- Assist principals and managers/supervisors to implement this procedure and to develop site specific procedures.

- Regularly review this procedure and recommend revisions, as needed.

1.3. Joint Health and Safety Committees will:

- Review hazard assessment results and provide recommendations to management to reduce and minimize the injury or incident risks.

- Participate in critical injury investigations, review injury/accident and incident reports, and recommend corrective measures.

- Respond to employee concerns related to working alone and communicate these to management.

1.4. All employees will:

- Work in compliance with the Occupational Health & Safety Act.
- Seek the permission of the site supervisor for any after hours or weekend use of school facilities and, if possible, ensure that at least two adult persons be present.
- Use personal protective equipment and clothing, as required.
- Inform another person, i.e. spouse or family member, of their plans to work alone in a building and if they are working for an extended time, keep in phone contact with a family member or friend.
- Advise their supervisors/managers of any hazards of working alone that may require additional assessment.
- Maintain a safe work environment and take every reasonable precaution when working alone.
- Ensure buildings are secured to prevent unauthorized entry during off-hours.
- Not respond to an intruder alarm alone and will wait for assistance of security or police.
- Not bring children, guests, or pets into LDSB workplaces.
- Not use Board property and/or equipment for personal use.
- Sign into LDSB workplaces during non-school hours.
- Ensure that security checks at night are done from inside the building.

- Schedule work so that portables may be checked in daylight hours.
- Ensure that garbage is disposed of in the dumpster before dark or while working with another person.
- Inform their supervisor if they have severe allergies or other medical conditions that may require an emergency response and plan a response to ensure their safety while working alone.
- Ensure that no hazardous work is conducted when working alone, such as work that requires ladders or scaffolds, or working with hazardous equipment, chemicals or materials. Such tasks must be rescheduled to a time when two people are present.
- Know the location of an area within the building that they can secure (lock). A safe or secure area is a location where staff may go to protect themselves and to report any suspicious incidents or intruders in the building.
- Know the location of a telephone in the work site and secure keys to permit access.
- Park their vehicle in a well-lit, easily visible location as close to the building exit as possible.
- In cases of emergency or threat, call 9-1-1 or pull the fire alarm. Both are monitored 24 hours per day and result in a response for assistance.

1.5. At all times, when working alone in isolated areas (i.e. basements, storage areas, mechanical rooms, roofs, portables):

a) Employees must inform someone of their whereabouts and provide an expected time of return to a colleague or supervisor.

b) Employees must have immediate access to a means of calling for assistance.

c) Employees must not use devices, such as headphones/earbuds, which can impair their ability to notice dangers and to hear others calling for assistance.

d) Staff who regularly work alone (custodians) in a building or at a work site, must have access to a safe area. As stated, a safe area is a location where staff may go to protect themselves and to report any suspicious incidents or intruders in the building. The employee(s) and the building supervisor will determine this location within their own building (s).

e) Portables are to be locked when not in use and after regular hours.

1.5.1. It is recommended that staff who work in portable classrooms, confine their work activities in their portable to the regular hours of work and move into the main building when they may be working extended hours such as before or after dark.

Interior doors to classrooms, gyms, storage areas, should be locked when the areas are not occupied.

1.6. Staff who handle and/or collect money in schools/departments

a) Must not keep large sums of money in isolated areas.

b) Should secure cheques and cash in a vault or under lock and key at all times.

c) Turn over money if you are threatened with violence.

d) Should ensure they have a communication device available in the location when working with money in isolated areas.

Appendix A

Working alone is prohibited, according to Ontario Regulations, when work involves any of the following:

- Confined space entry. [O.Reg 851, RRO 1990, Sec. 69 (f)].
- An installation, equipment or conduction operating at a normal voltage of 300 volts or more, except while testing equipment or troubleshooting. An individual, who is able to recognize the hazards and perform rescue operations, including artificial respiration, will be available and able to see the worker performing the work. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 42.1]
- Electrical systems rated at more than 750 volts. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 42.2]
- A portable ladder exceeding six metres or 18 feet in length and is not securely fastened, or works with a ladder that is likely to be endangered by traffic. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 73]
- Work requiring the use of fall arrest equipment and scaffolds.
- Quick-acting acutely toxic material. [CSA Standard Z94.4-93, Sec. 9.3.3, 9.3.4]
- The use of supplied air respiratory equipment or self-contained breathing apparatus. [CSA Standard Z94.4-93, Sec. 9.3.3, 9.3.4]
- Use of a vehicle, or similar equipment near a live power line where it is possible for any part of the equipment or its load to contact the live power line. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 60]
- Use of a vehicle, or similar equipment where the operator does not have full view of the intended path of travel. [O. Reg 851, Sec. 56]
- In addition, the following are also prohibited:

- Work which presents a risk of drowning, unless equipped with a personal floatation device.
- Welding operation where a fire watcher is required.
- Tasks which, based on the hazard assessment conducted by the manager/supervisor, in consultation with the JHSC, are deemed to require more than one person.

Appendix B

Examples of potential steps to minimize or eliminate identified working alone risks include, but are not limited to:

- Providing internal and external numbers for workers to call for assistance;
- Provision of an effective means of communication (e.g. cell phones, radios, pagers);
- Establishment of an effective contact system (check in procedures, periodic site visits), with the frequency of contact determined based on the hazard assessment;
- Establishment of code words indicating that assistance is needed;
- Introduction of security systems such as personal alarms, fixed alarms connected to security services or regular security patrols;
- Development and implementation of procedures for opening, closing or securing the workplace prior to starting and when ending shifts;
- Documentation and communication of when working alone is permitted or prohibited;
- Scheduling potentially hazardous work for times when appropriate assistance is available;
- Providing a buddy system for hazardous tasks performed at off-hours or remote locations.

Legal References

Occupational Health & Safety Act
Administrative Procedure 404 – Occupational Health & Safety
Administrative Procedure 403 – Conflict of Interest
Administrative Procedure 447 – Personal Use of Board Owned Property, Equipment, & Resources A