**Working Alone or in Isolation Research Activities Guidance Document**

This document provides research safety-specific guidance for PIs and Lab Supervisors to assist in developing Working Alone or in Isolation Protocols. It is recommended that [GP 39, its appendices](https://www.sfu.ca/policies/gazette/general/gp39.html), and the [Supervisor Guidance document](https://www.sfu.ca/content/sfu/srs/work-research-safety/general-safety/working-alone-or-in-isolation/resources-for-supervisors/_jcr_content/main_content/download/file.res/Supervisor%20guidance%20document%2016.05.2022.pdf) be reviewed prior to reading this document.

**Risk Assessment**

The chart below provides some examples of research activities with high, moderate, and low risk levels:

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| --- | --- |
| High | * Activities with the potential for explosion or out of control reaction, activities involving highly toxic, highly corrosive, pyrophoric, or other highly reactive or otherwise highly dangerous substances. * A task where there is risk of drowning * Work activities in a location where there is a risk of violence * Work in a remote area where there is wildlife or rapidly changing environmental hazards (e.g. wildfire, avalanche, landslides, flash flood) |
| Moderate | * Lab work that does not involve highly hazardous materials or where those materials are being used in a highly controlled environment, or using amounts that are very limited.   + Examples include: handling of small volumes of chemicals, use of x-rays, super magnets, NMR, or MRI, handling of radioactive materials (above exempt quantities), Class 3B and 4 lasers, and work in Risk Group 2 Biohazard labs * Work in isolated areas or those with extreme temperature environments * Work with human subjects |
| Low | * Laboratory work with minimal risk (analytical equipment, monitoring equipment or process, work not involving hazardous materials or equipment). * Routine office work when limited or no other Employees are present in the work area. * Remote routine office work |

If the following research activities have been authorized to proceed, it is highly recommended a buddy system be utilized:

* Minors or undergrads working in a laboratory may not work unsupervised under any circumstance
* Diving activities including EMPU simulated hyperbaric and hypobaric conditions
* Experiments involving the use of higher hazard materials (pyrophorics, cyanides);
* Using highly toxic (eg. HF, osmium tetroxide, azides), highly corrosive or otherwise \*dangerous chemicals. \*The danger must be an immediate or acute hazard;
* Work in the CL3 facility;
* Alignment of Class 3B/4 lasers

**Examples of Control Measures**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Hazards** | **Suggested Control Measures** |
| Lab material (chemicals, biohazards, radioactive material, flammable material, animals, sharps, UV light, lasers, X-rays, compressed gases, etc. | * Completion of Lab Safety training or hazard specific training   + See all research & lab safety training offerings here: <https://www.sfu.ca/srs/work-research-safety/training.html> * Only persons familiar with lab protocols and SOPs are authorized to work alone * Access to a communication method * Personal protective equipment is provided and appropriate use is ensured * All staff know the location of spill kit and supplies, fire alarms, fire extinguishers, emergency showers/eyewash stations and telephones * Ensure the Safety Data Sheet has been consulted |

**Additional Support**

For general inquiries about working alone or in isolation or specific questions about documentation, please contact [vanessa\_christner@sfu.ca](mailto:vanessa_christner@sfu.ca). For risk assessment guidance or questions about specific hazards, please contact [labsafe@sfu.ca](mailto:labsafe@sfu.ca).