

Working Alone in the Laboratory

The University's Laboratory Safety Committee (LSC) has recognized that there are special, greater potential hazards and risks associated with laboratory personnel working alone in the lab with Biological, Chemical, Radiological materials and special hazards such as High Pressure, High Voltage, and Cryogenic physical hazards. The risk of injury is increased and so is the risk of the seriousness of the injury. These are very serious problems indeed, and ones that have occurred at other universities.

EH&S and the LSC recommended that no one work alone with hazardous materials in the lab, but we also recognize that there are circumstances where this may be necessary. As a result, a program has been developed where working alone must be authorized by the responsible Principal Investigator (PI) of the lab. The authorization form is can be found on our website along with a list of after-hours prohibited activities. If an activity is not prohibited, the Primary Investigator along with the research staff member can assemble a work plan to address after hours work. If the activity planned is on the prohibited list, it may still be performed in most cases after hours so long as a buddy is in attendance for the work and notification of the CWRU Communications center is given. The work plan must be approved by EH&S for any prohibited activities after hours.

- Permission To Work Alone Authorization Form-Work Plan
- Prohibited After Hours Activities

The Permission to Work Alone Authorization form requires the PI to evaluate activities that would help mitigate or prevent an accident or injury to the person working alone. These may include: limiting activity to certain hours, limiting activity with certain materials, establishing a system where one could contact help immediately (CWRU Alert), and of course, limiting the work to trained and qualified personnel. If you have a need to work alone after hours, please review the form, complete it and submit it to EH&S. If you need any assistance in establishing procedures to mitigate the hazards and risks, do not hesitate to contact us. We will be happy to help you through this process.