

FY11 IT Safety Self Assessment

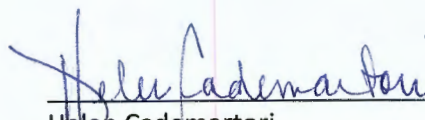
Working Alone

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Date

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Working Alone in this document will be defined as working in an environment where an individual can not be seen, heard, and/or is unable to use or reach a mobile or land line phone or radio device to communicate directly with another human being immediately.

Executive Summary:

Working alone is a Lab issue and affects IT as well. This assessment looked at staff in the field who have to work in Labs, at the ALS, at the 88 inch Cyclotron and other locations that have potential hazards to see whether there were processes in place to ensure that in the event of an accident or injury, staff could get the help they needed. We learned that currently most IT staff working alone probably could not get help in an emergency. While we cannot at a Division level solve this problem alone, we determined that IT needs to formalize some protocols for when field staff are in a working alone environment.

Introduction:

The issue of working alone has been discussed in the past, but never formally reviewed. There is a heightened concern at the Lab in relation to work alone conditions in light of incidents in other divisions. While IT does not have to deal directly with chemical or biological agents as workers in other divisions do, IT staff does support those other divisions and work within their work spaces. This assessment reviews current work-alone practices, potential hazards that might be encountered by field staff, and opportunities for improving field work practices and procedures.

Assessment Scope:

This self-assessment focuses on what precautions are taken when IT staff are required to work alone either on or offsite. The assessment reviews any training that may be necessary as well as how staff and their work leads keep one another informed of their work status. This assessment focuses mainly on the Mac PC and Support Group (MPSG), LBLnet and High Performance Computing (HPC) who service various divisions both on and off the hill. These groups were picked due to the diversity of locations they service. This assessment specifically excludes the Confined space program as these activities are managed by a permitting process that does not allow work alone by design.

Current Requirements:

The institutional requirement for Working Alone Standards was found to be lacking per the FY 2009 ES&H Self-Assessment Report. There were also increased concerns at the lab following an incident in the Material Sciences division during which a student working alone had a chemical splatter on him. Since there was to be an institutional review of the issue, IT decided to look at how and when work alone situations occur for IT staff, and what safeguards are in place for handling emergencies. There currently is no such written policy in place.

Assessment Results:

Nine individuals from the three areas were formally interviewed. Additional informal comments were given by additional staff.

The only formalized precaution in place is for staff members to follow their task specific safety training as described in their JHA. This includes keeping current with their required training (i.e. EHS 361 for working in the computer room which provides among other things training for knowing how to shut down the halon- based fire suppression in case of accidental triggering). When going into a job staff have a defined scope of work within a specific work area that may require site specific training such as required when accessing the 88 inch Cyclotron or ALS.. One observation of the assessment is that most potential hazards are location specific. For example a staff member may go to work on a computer in a lab and be directed by the "lab owner" to avoid certain chemicals or experiments but not be told what to do if in fact these do get disturbed and the "lab owner" is unavailable.

LBLnet networking staff appear to have the most regular discussions of working alone due to the small size of their group. They were the only group with a formalized method of recording where each staff will be throughout the day. They do this with a check-in board that notes a staff members locations and time the day.

An MPSG staff member worked in an environment which potentially could have required LOTO. While working on the operating system on the computer for a lathe in the engineering machine room the engineer overseeing the work ended his shift leaving the IT worker to complete the task. While shielding was present on the equipment to avoid snaring, directions were not left should the IT staff member inadvertently activate the lathe while operating on the computer interface.

Some HPC staff work at a datacenter on the UCB campus (Earl Warren Hall datacenter) which has cameras that are monitored by an attendant from 6:00 AM – 12:00 AM Monday thru Friday. Entrance and exits from the data center are card keyed in and out. It was noted that at the datacenters at the lab entrances are card keyed into data centers but not exits and there are no cameras. Some facilities have windows into the work spaces; some do not (building 55).

In some areas staff could have an emergency and be seen (i.e. Earl Warren between 6:00 AM and 12:00 AM with attendant) where in other spaces there would be very little chance of someone seeing an emergency. This is the case for example in building 55 where the workspace is locked and there isn't even a window for the passer by to see if something happened to someone inside.

LBLnet employees noted that they occasionally go into basement or outdoor environments where they could potentially encounter snakes, black widow spiders, etc. This is a hazard that isn't necessarily outlined in the JHA but has been discussed in departmental meetings. Is this something that needs to be captured?

Findings:

N/A

Observations:

Not all work leads were aware that staff were left alone in the field to the extent that it could be considered working alone

Unclear how to capture the hazard of spiders and snakes but should probably have a mention in the JHA.

There should definitely be a way to know who is on what call at any given time. Each group with team members in the field should have a check in/out procedure in place.

Recommended Corrective Actions:

Each department and line manager in IT needs to review what it will require for working alone and document a process/procedure to be implemented into the division ISM. This could be a process incorporated into the JHA of each employee who has to work alone but it has to be something that is actively reviewed per job when working alone occurs.

Self-Assessment Methodology:

Person conducting self-assessment: Division Safety Coordinator

Personnel were questioned as to when and how in a non-office type work scenario, they would encounter working alone. The question was to focus on technicians in the field either in a server room or servicing clients in the field setting up or servicing workstations. Those interviewed were randomly selected from the MPSG, LBLnet and HPC groups.

Interviews with:

5 staff from MPSG, 3staff from HPC, 2staff from LBLnet, 1staff from Production Services

Lines of Inquiry

1. What do you do when you are going to work in an unfamiliar environment?
2. Do you read all posted signs?
3. Does the individual you are doing work for or their designee escort you in the controlled work environment?
4. Is your JHA current?
5. Does feedback and improvement occur? How?