



Driving Can Be a Lonely and Isolating Job

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A lack of direct supervision means an employer doesn't have the ability to respond to an emergency or correct unsafe actions quickly. This inherently makes the work being done more hazardous and increases the severity of risks present in the work being done. Being away from immediate assistance, also known as working in isolation, only compounds this.

While the Canada Labour Code doesn't have specific definitions or requirements for federal employers to follow, that doesn't absolve an employer of responsibility in these situations. Remember, every employer is bound to the general duties clause requiring that "every employer shall ensure that the health and safety at work of every person employed by the employer is protected" see section 124 of the Canada Labour Code.

Part of ensuring the general duties clause is fulfilled is by establishing safe work procedures. For provincial carriers, establishing safe work procedures for work done alone or in isolation is written into the law (see [Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Regulations Part 9](#)). Under the provincial law, these procedures must include certain aspects as outlined in section 9.3(2) (a)-(c) of the Manitoba Workplace Safety and Health Regulations.

These requirements also form what is considered best practice from an occupational safety viewpoint. They are:

- The establishment of a radio, telephone, or other effective communication system
- A system of regular contact, limiting or prohibiting certain activities, and/or establishing training requirements
- If appropriate, providing emergency supplies for those who travel or work in cold conditions.

Let's delve into the specifics of each aspect, starting with a regular communication system:

- Communication is the most important aspect of any alone/isolated safe work practice. This is done through what is called a check-in procedure. On a regular basis, potentially every few hours, the worker or supervisor will contact one another to ensure that everything is running smoothly. By checking in an employer can mitigate the lack of direct supervision we talked about earlier. If a worker doesn't check in at their allotted time their supervisor knows something must be wrong and can initiate a search procedure far quicker. Additionally, regularly checking in with drivers can help mitigate some of the negative mental effects of working alone for up weeks on end.
- Professional drivers are stuck in a particularly precarious situation should an emergency occur on the job. If a truck is broken down and unable to start its driver could be stuck isolated for hours away from help. If that breakdown occurs during the dead of winter that worker could now be subject to hypothermic shock or severe



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frostbite. Situations like this illustrate just how important emergency response supplies are to alone or isolated workers. Ensuring that a driver’s vehicle is equipped with a working fire extinguisher and a fully stocked first-aid and emergency response kit is key to mitigating this risk.

- Establishing training requirements is important when it comes to any safe work procedure but is especially valuable when it comes to isolated work. If a driver is unable to communicate with their dispatch during an emergency or access help quickly having the proper emergency response training could mean the difference between life and death.
- Finally, limiting or prohibiting certain activities for drivers can prevent incidents from occurring that make alone or isolated workers particularly vulnerable. Drivers are often responsible for transporting valuable cargo, making the fact that they work alone particularly appeal to criminals.

A written policy that prevents drivers from transporting unauthorized passengers and requires that stops are made at secure rest locations can prevent alone workers from running into trouble.

For more reading on this topic please check out at the following resources:

[CCOHS Working Alone Fact Sheet](#)

[Driver Safety- Working Alone](#)- Women’s Trucking Federation

[ESDC Working Alone Legal Interpretation](#)

[Working Alone Template](#)- BC Forest Safe

[Working Alone: A Handbook for Small Business](#)- Work Safe BC

Do you need more information? RPM can help!

RPM offers Safety for Supervisors, a half-day course designed to help individuals better understand their workplace responsibilities. We also offer a more intensive, forty hour course, Fleet Safety Managers, designed to provides the Safety Manager the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively and efficiently determine what data is valuable, identify the “right” problem to solve, implement action plans, effectively leverage technologies and telematics, and learn the principles of continuous risk improvement.

Please note RPM courses are offered to RPM registered companies only. Your company must be registered with RPM and be in the process of working towards certification or must have achieved the SAFE Work Manitoba Trucking Certificate of Recognition. Not yet registered in the RPM program? Today is a great day to get started!

