

Township of Douro-Dummer Public Library

Policy Type: **Personnel**

Policy Title: **Working Alone**

Policy Number: **DDPL-Per-008**

Policy Approval Date: Revised and Adopted May 2024

Date of Next Review: May 2025

Policy Statement: To provide guidelines for the Douro-Dummer Public Library, concerning Staff and Volunteers working alone in the Library. This policy is used in conjunction with the Township of Douro Dummer Health and Safety Policy

Purpose: The Douro-Dummer Public Library ensures fair conditions for library members, volunteers, staff and others who visit the premises in accordance with the *Public Libraries Act* R.S.O. 1990. To provide a policy to guide the safe conduct of Library business for employees and volunteers that are required to work alone.

This policy is to ensure appropriate supervisory due diligence and to promote safe work procedures for the health and safety of employees and volunteers working alone.

Definitions: Working alone describes situations during the course of employment by an employee or volunteer who is:

- a) the only worker for the employer or volunteer at the library at any time, and/or
- b) not directly supervised by their employer, or another person designated as a supervisor by their employer, at any time and/or
- c) working at a site where assistance is not readily available, and/or
- d) in an area where they do not have direct contact with a co-worker for a period of time and cannot be seen or heard by another person; and/or cannot expect a visit from another worker.

While it is not always hazardous to work alone, it can be when other circumstances are present.

Whether a situation is a high or low risk will depend on the location, type of work, interaction with the public, or the consequences of an emergency, accident, injury, etc. This wide variety of circumstances makes it important to assess each situation individually.

Working alone is prohibited when work involves:

- a portable ladder that exceeds 6 metres in length; the use of fall arrest equipment and scaffolds;
- machine and power tools that could cause critical injury (i.e. chain saw);
- tasks which, based on the risk assessment conducted by the supervisor in consultation with the employee or volunteer and the H&S Coordinator, are deemed to require more than one person or any other tasks as prescribed by the OHSA and its regulations.

Consequences of Non-Compliance: This policy is intended to provide a level of protection for township employees while working alone- non-compliance may put an employee or volunteer in unsafe situations which could result in injury or harm. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action.

Review Cycle: This policy will be reviewed for revision on a 4-year cycle, but can also be revised as required by the CEO/Librarian and/or the Library Board. This policy supersedes any previous policy.

Chairperson: Georgia Gale-Kidd

CEO/Librarian: Maggie Pearson

Personnel Policies – DDPL Per-008 – Schedule A – Working Alone Procedures

Schedule A - Working Alone Procedures

1. Responsibilities:

- a) Working alone situations shall be identified and assessed co-operatively by the CEO/Librarian, employees and volunteers.
- b) The working alone safety plan shall be documented by the CEO/Librarian, employee or volunteer and reviewed as required
- c) The CEO/Librarian, employees and volunteers must ensure ongoing communication regarding the effectiveness of the safety plan and adjust as circumstances change (such as medical concerns, increased risk of violence from public etc.).
- d) The CEO/Librarian shall provide on-going training and instructions to employees or volunteers for their specific working alone situations.

2. Specific Guidelines:

Working alone safety plans must address the following considerations:

- a) Communication Tools: Tools may include two-way radio or telephone. The plan should include the provision of a tool appropriate for the position as well as a back-up should the primary means of communication become unavailable. There shall be a phone in the office (with both doors that can lock) at all times.
- b) Timing and Location: The length of time an employee or volunteer will be working alone including expectations regarding the amount of time that is reasonable as well as the distance of the working location from home and the Library.
- c) Contact with the Public: To include strategies to ensure that when an employee or volunteer is alone they are able to arrange a meeting occurring at a safe meeting location and time.
- d) Check-in Procedures: To ensure procedures have been established for regular contact with the supervisor and/or other members of the department. These procedures shall include a daily work plan to be provided to the CEO/Librarian that outlines the employee or volunteer's working alone activities throughout the day.
- e) Cash Handling Procedures: Where an employee or volunteer working alone is required to handle cash, a minimal amount of cash shall be kept in the register.

Library Employees: Librarian and Part time staff

Activities performed:

- Cash handling.
- Work alone as sole occupant in building.
- Work alone in secluded areas in a building occupied by the public.
- Travel alone but have no routine interaction with clients or the public.

Employees who work alone during normal working hours: When employees are working alone at a location the following must be adhered to, ensuring the safety of the employee:

Describe precautions taken to safeguard employees who work alone:

- Telephones are in place in all office areas. All meetings with members of the public shall be conducted in the established meeting rooms- not in the employee's office.
- During times when employees are working outside of normal working hours all access doors to the library shall be locked to prevent public access

Further steps which should be taken within the Library Facility to prevent risks of working alone:

An employee that is working alone in the Administration facility should ensure that another person is aware that they are working alone and the expected time of return.

Employees who work alone away from the office during normal working hours:

When employees are working alone at a location the following must be adhered to, ensuring the safety of the employee:

When traveling out of the office, the main contact person should know the following details:

- destination,
- estimated time of arrival,
- return time or date,
- contact information,
- alternate plans in the event of bad weather, traffic problems, etc.

Check-in procedure is:

- Prepare a daily work plan so it is known where the lone employee will be and when.
- Identify one main person to be the contact at the office, plus a back-up.
- Define under what circumstances the lone employee will check in and how often.
- Stick to the visual check or call-in schedule. You may wish to have a written log of contact.
- Have the contact person call or visit the lone employee periodically to make sure he or she is okay.
- Pick out a code word to be used to identify or confirm that help is needed.
- Develop an emergency action plan to be followed if the lone employee does not check-in when he or she is supposed to.

Do:

- Arrange to meet patrons in a 'safe' environment where other people are around.
- Wear comfortable, professional clothing and practical shoes which will enable you to leave quickly if necessary.
- Always wear or carry *your identification badge*. It will show that you are acting in an official capacity and that you are an employee doing your job.
- Carry only what is necessary.
- Always take your cell phone or radio with you and keep it in a place you can access quickly.
- Be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive at a new place.
- Maintain a 'reactionary gap' between yourself and the other person (e.g., out of reach of the average person's kicking distance). Increase the gap by sitting across from each other at a table, if possible.
- If you are referring to written material, bring two copies so that you can sit across from the person, not beside.
- Ask a colleague or "buddy" to come with you if something makes you feel uneasy. Tell your supervisor about any feelings of discomfort or apprehension about an upcoming meeting.
- Keep records and indicate if the client or patient is known to be aggressive, hostile or potentially violent. Do not leave out incidents that make you feel apprehensive.

Do Not:

- Do not enter any situation or location where you feel threatened or unsafe.
- Do not carry weapons of any type, including pepper spray. Weapons can be easily used against you and are illegal in some jurisdictions