

You Raise the Issue

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Question: I own a business where a number of my employees are required to work alone from time to time. Are there any special rules or regulations that I need to be aware of?

Yes. In October of 2000, the Government of Alberta amended the General Safety Regulation under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* to deal with concerns regarding employees who work alone. According to the Regulation, to "work alone" means to work alone at a work site in circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of an injury, illness or emergency. If an employer requires employees to work alone, the employer has certain obligations. First, the employer must perform a hazard assessment in order to identify existing or potential hazards. Further hazard assessments must also be performed at appropriate intervals. The hazard assessments must be in writing and must be communicated to all affected employees.

Second, the employer must provide a means of communication, such as a radio, telephone or other electronic communication device, between the employee and persons capable of responding to the employee's needs. If it is not practical to provide an effective means of communication, the employer must visit the employee or ensure that the employee contacts the employer at intervals that are appropriate to the nature of the hazards associated with the work.

Finally, the employer must take all reasonable steps to eliminate any hazards that have been identified. If it is not possible to eliminate the hazards, then the employer must take steps to control the hazards. Where possible, the employees should be involved in both the assessment and elimination or control of the hazards.

As an employer, you should ensure that your company complies with these regulations. If you are unsure about the requirements, you should contact a lawyer for further information.

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