

BRSD Working Alone Procedure – Module 1: Working Outside Normal Operating Hours

This protocol is to be followed to ensure the safety of BRSD staff members who are working alone at a BRSD site outside of normal operational hours. Due to the fact that staff are working alone in these environments, which is inherently dangerous, adequate measures must be taken to minimize the risk related to this work. Attempts should be made to avoid working alone, when possible.

Examples of working alone scenarios that would fall under this module include: School staff working after hours or on weekends within a school building, Division staff working after hours or on weekends in central buildings and key holders responding to afterhours alarm call outs at BRSD buildings.

PROCEDURES FOR BRSD BUILDINGS

General

If at all possible, refrain from working alone between the hours of 11:00 pm- 6:00 am.

Do not plan to work alone or work after hours if hazardous weather is forecasted.

After school hours and during vacation periods, all staff shall ensure their classroom blinds are closed when working after dark and ensure all windows and doors are closed/ locked prior to leaving the building and/or classroom.

High hazard work such as working from heights (other than on ladders), cash handling, boiler take downs, rooftop inspections, operating dangerous equipment (e.g. table saws) and heavy/awkward lifting shall **not** be conducted while working alone. These must be scheduled during daytime working hours or when others are readily available to provide assistance in the event of an emergency.

Exterior entrance ways and parking areas should be lit after hours to ensure safe egress.

When staff are working after hours at BRSD sites, it is important for them to announce themselves in the building. This is usually accomplished by some form of afterhours sign in, such as a white board at the main entrance that staff write their name on to indicate they are in the building. This will ensure others coming in know someone is in the building and will help avoid staff activating the building's alarm system with others still in the building.

Communication Systems

All staff working alone should have ready access to a phone or other communication device to summon assistance if needed.

Staff who are working alone need to know how to contact the designated school contact person (e.g. principal, head custodian) for assistance in the event of an after-hours emergency.

It is recommended to pre-program emergency telephone numbers into phones and cell phones (e.g. 911, Administrator's business cell number and others as appropriate).

Be aware that most BRSD facilities have alarms that automatically set at 11pm or midnight. If you are in the building working late enough, the alarm will activate itself and you may set it off unintentionally. Be sure to know what actions to take to disable the alarm effectively in this situation if you regularly work after hours.

Building Security

Security system deterrents should be in place where reasonable (mirrors, alarms, cameras). The use of some of these systems can also be advertised as a further deterrent, ie. Signs that indicate 'you are on camera'.

Each staff member is responsible for securing their own classroom or work area (e.g. closing/locking windows and doors) prior to leaving the building at the end of their day.

Window coverings should be closed after hours to minimize visibility into the building.

All BRSD buildings should be secured by having exterior doors locked after normal operational hours to restrict access to the building. The one exception is when afterhours rental groups are utilizing portions of the building.

Afternoon custodial staff and other staff working after hours should be familiar with all rental groups and contact persons that use the building. A list of rental groups, booking times and contact numbers should be posted in the custodial office.

In rental situations, sometimes custodians are responsible to lock and unlock school doors. Refer to the signed Rental Agreement which all outside groups must have. Rental groups shall be restricted to designated areas of the building. Doors leading to other wings of the building shall be locked. All rental groups and staff/students in the building after hours should enter and leave via the designated doors.

All building checks conducted by staff shall be conducted from **inside** the building.

If a stranger or suspicious person requests entry to the building after doors are locked, the door should remain locked and the staff member should address the individual through the locked door. If the individual advises that they require emergency assistance, the staff member should advise them that they will call 911 immediately. **Do Not Unlock the Door!**

Tips for Entering and Leaving the Building/Immediate Work Area When Working Alone

- Always be **AWARE** of your surroundings. If you see odd behavior trust your instincts and get assistance.
- Park your vehicle in a well-lit area as close to the entrance as possible.
- Keep keys and/or security card in ready to use position when walking to and from the building.
- If you have concerns, return to a safe/ secure area and contact your supervisor.
- Never have a stranger walk with you to or from your vehicle.
- Scan area for suspicious persons loitering around the building. If they do not leave move to a secure area and call for help. If you require an escort to your vehicle, call for assistance.

- Look around and make sure you are not being observed or followed. If you see suspicious persons do not go to your car. Have an alternate plan. Know the closest place to seek safety.
- If carrying bags or packages put them in the trunk before entering the car. Avoid carrying heavy items or multiple items to your vehicle (load them during regular hours)
- Lock car doors and keep windows rolled up immediately after entering or exiting your vehicle.
- Leave immediately. Do not use cell phones or search for items in purse etc.

Tips if Confronted by a Stranger, Intruder, Suspicious or Hostile Person:

- Remain calm and courteous
- Look them straight in the eye and make small talk (e.g. are you looking for someone, can I help you?). Try to determine the person's reason for being present.
- Do not say or do anything the intruder might view as threatening.
- Try not to show signs of weakness, fear or uncertainty.
- If you feel uncomfortable or threatened (trust your instincts) find a safe location (locked room) and contact your supervisor and/or **police/911**.
- If the person tries to steal personal or district property do not resist or chase the person.
- Carefully observe what the person looks like and what they are wearing. Call **911** and call security only when it is safe to do so.

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS

Afternoon Custodial Staff (CCHS)

Afternoon custodial staff shall check in with the head custodian at the beginning of their shift. The head custodian will identify verbally or via written notes or e-mail any necessary information related to shift activities.

A check in procedure shall be established with co-workers during the work shift.

Handling Cash

When BRSD staff handle cash, every effort should be made to provide arrangements that are as safe and secure as is possible in the circumstances. For example, keeping cash counting out of view of the general public, keeping cash stores secure, and keeping the handling of cash as a confidential matter.

Cash handling within BRSD buildings should not be done alone as the person is more at risk without assistance readily available.

When carrying cash to the bank, it should be carried during regular operational hours and the monies should be enclosed and not plainly visible. Efforts should be made to keep the amounts to a minimum by making trips more often. Cash should never be taken home.

Key Holders and Intruder Alarm Call Out

Intruder alarms in BRSD properties are connected to a central monitoring station. When the alarm activates, the central station contacts the key holder, to advise of the activation, and the police, who respond in case a burglary is either in progress or has to be investigated.

Occasionally, the police are busy dealing with other matters and they can only afford to offer a cursory inspection of the alarmed premises before proceeding to the next incident.

If police response is unavailable, the key holder alone will be responsible for attending the premises, checking them and resetting the alarm.

An audible warning device (bell or siren) may only sound for 20 minutes. For the sake of convenience, it should therefore be programmed to stop automatically after 20 minutes to avoid complaints from neighbours. A strobe light may continue to flash thereafter indefinitely.

Key holders should be physically fit, able-bodied persons, and capable of meeting the requirement of the role. It should not be overlooked that despite all precautions, key holders might still become involved in a potentially threatening or violent situation. They should therefore be physically and psychologically suited to the task. The key holder may be an employee or alternatively could be provided by a security company, as these are acceptable to the police.

The risk assessment process should consider the arrangements in place to monitor the safety of any employee asked to act as key holder, in the same way as for any other lone worker. It should be possible to come to an arrangement with them to develop a system which would allow employees to inform them when they have been called out and for a relative, friend, senior colleague or the police to be informed if a contact call finalising the call out is not made by a pre-determined time in order that further enquiries about the whereabouts of the employee might be made.

In some cases the key holder may enlist the support of non-employee relatives or friends to accompany them, however they would not be expected to enter the premises.

With police attendance:

1. Before entering the premises, check the perimeter to see if there are any obvious signs of intrusion. If there are signs of intrusion, the police should check the premises in case the intruder is still inside.
2. If there are no signs of intrusion, ask the police officer(s) attending to accompany you while you check the premises, identified the cause of the alarm activation and reset the system before they leave the scene.
3. If the police have to leave urgently before you are able to complete checking the premises, finalise or terminate your check, reset the alarm if you are able to and leave also.

Without police attendance:

1. Before entering the premises, check the perimeter to see if there are any obvious signs of an intrusion such as flashing lights, broken windows, doors damaged or noise. If there are obvious signs of an intrusion, cease the check immediately and DO NOT ENTER THE BUILDING. The police should be contacted immediately and advised that there are signs of a burglary. They will then attend and check the premises in case the intruder is still inside.
2. Discreetly await the arrival of the police and note any information which might be of use to them, e.g. vehicle registration number and description, description of anyone who leaves the premises, direction of travel, property carried etc. The information should if possible be written down at the time or as soon as possible afterwards in order to avoid forgetting what might be important.

Other tips:

1. A flashlight would be a useful aid for checking premises when it is dark.
2. A mobile phone should be available to all employees who respond to alarm call outs so they can summon police assistance and to act as a means of checking in with the pre-arranged management contact or concerned friends or relatives.
3. Sufficient alarm callout responders must be trained in correctly operating the alarm system and be familiar with the layout of the premises for which they are responsible to ensure backup coverage is available in the event of the primary persons absences due to leave, ill health etc.