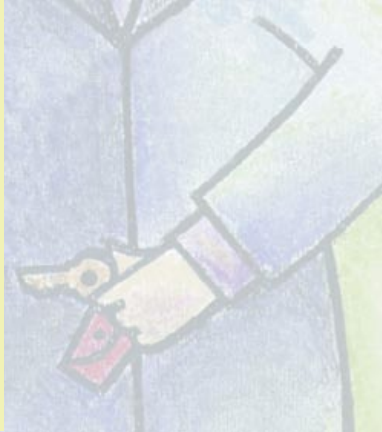
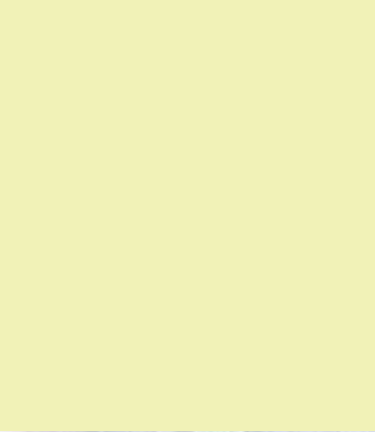


TIPS FOR  
WORKING ALONE

KEEPING  
SAFE  
AT  
WORK





TIPS FOR  
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# TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

Manitoba communities are, on the whole, safe places in which to live and work. However, a first-ever study of its kind released in February 2007 revealed that nearly one-fifth of all incidents of violent victimization in Canada's ten provinces, including physical assault, sexual assault and robbery, occurred in the victim's **workplace**. According to the study, one-third of all workplace violence incidents involved a victim who was working in social assistance or health care services such as hospitals, nursing or residential care facilities; with a high incidence as well in accommodation or food services, retail or wholesale trade, and educational services sectors.

No matter where you work, or what type of work you do, you can enhance your safety by increasing your awareness of potentially threatening situations and planning responses to them. Employers can introduce basic **safety** devices and train staff in safety awareness. Small business owners can work together to set up safety programs. This is of special concern to women, who are overall more likely to work in healthcare or the service industries.

This booklet provides some basic tips about keeping safe at work – please read them and use whatever is applicable to your situation. And remember: **awareness and prevention are the keys to increasing personal safety in the workplace.**

KEEPING  
**SAFE**  
AT  
**WORK**

# TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

## WORKPLACE ACTION - ALONE AND ALERT

### PLAN AHEAD

- ▶ Ask about the risk assessment plan at your workplace.
- ▶ Plan emergency exits. Know about safe places and the location of pay phones.
- ▶ Try to imagine appropriate responses to various situations and **decide ahead of time** how you will respond.
- ▶ If your work takes you to new or different settings, be alert and make mental notes of your surroundings when you arrive. The first time you go into a new setting, or if you are in a place where you feel uneasy, phone your own workplace when you arrive and again before you leave.
- ▶ When you enter an office or meeting place alone, be aware of your surroundings.
- ▶ If you must meet new work contacts out of the workplace, choose a public place. **Keep personal information private.**
- ▶ Avoid having new work contacts walk you to the car or escort you to your home or hotel room.
- ▶ When entering an elevator, stand next to the controls. Wait for the next elevator if you feel uneasy about any of the occupants. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, push the button for the next floor or push the alarm and all buttons (except stop).
- ▶ **Trust your instincts.** If someone you work with makes you uncomfortable, discuss the situation with a co-worker you trust. Plan your response to potential problems.

## BE AWARE

- ▶ Know staff in other stores, offices and businesses. Be aware of their schedules.
- ▶ If you are suspicious of people hanging around or strange phone calls, notify the police and staff in neighbouring stores. Try to get a description of the person and the car (if there is one).
- ▶ **Be assertive and confident.**  
Look at and greet customers.
- ▶ If you feel uncomfortable after someone enters, trust your instincts. Look directly at the person. Make it clear you are in charge and cannot be intimidated. Phone for help.
- ▶ Make sure that back doors or secondary doors are locked.
- ▶ Check all lighting before it gets dark.

## IF YOU ARE WORKING LATE

- ▶ Let security or a friend know, and tell them when you expect to leave.
- ▶ While another co-worker is present, **check that all doors are locked** and that washrooms and storage rooms are empty.
- ▶ If you suspect someone is lurking outside, call police or security officers.
- ▶ If you enter a washroom and suspect someone is lurking in there, don't call out. Back out, go to a safe area with a lockable door and phone for help. (Plan ahead for safe places.)

## CHALLENGING STRANGERS IN THE WORKPLACE

- ▶ If you are alone or working late and you encounter someone who should not be in your area, indicate that you are not alone. Say, “My supervisor will be right here and will be able to help you.”
- ▶ Use assertive, but respectful, language.
  - You may wish to leave the area and seek assistance.

## KEEP PERSONAL INFORMATION PRIVATE

- ▶ Avoid discussing where you live, after-work plans, or vacation plans in front of, or with, customers or anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable.

## TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

### GETTING TO AND FROM WORK

Employers must provide adequate transportation between the residence and the workplace for employees who start or end their shift between 12:00 am and 6:00 am.

### RIDING THE BUS/TRANSIT SYSTEM

- ▶ Carry a schedule. After dark, arrive at the stop just before the transit vehicle is due.
- ▶ On the bus, sit near others. Tell the driver if you are being bothered.
- ▶ Use the Request Stop service available on some bus routes. Call your local transit authority for more information on this service.

### DRIVING

- ▶ Do not identify your keys with car plate numbers or name and address.

- ▶ Carry a personal safety alarm on your key chain. It will help attract attention if you are attacked.
- ▶ Keep your car in good repair. The gas tank should be at least half full and the tires in reliable condition at all times.
- ▶ Park in well-lit spaces. Walk with others after dark.
- ▶ If you park in an underground parkade, make sure you are near the attendant or an exit.
- ▶ **Always lock your car**, when it's parked and when you're driving it.
- ▶ Have your key ready and check inside the car to be sure no one is hiding there.
- ▶ Don't open your car window more than one inch to speak to someone approaching your car. Drive away if you feel uncomfortable.
- ▶ If you suspect another car is following yours, do not go home. Drive to a service, police, fire station, or brightly lit convenience store, and stay in your car. Honk the horn in short repeated blasts until someone comes out to help you.

## **IF YOUR CAR BREAKS DOWN**

- ▶ Carry a "Help! Call Police" sign in your vehicle emergency kit, and use it in an emergency. Do not raise the hood of your car, but do activate your emergency flashers to alert other drivers that you are stationary and require assistance.
- ▶ Stay in the car with windows closed and doors locked.
- ▶ Open the window only one inch to speak to anyone other than the police.
- ▶ **Consider obtaining a cellular phone** to keep in your car for emergency use.

Pre-program the phone to a local emergency number.

## WALKING

- ▶ Wear comfortable shoes, such as runners.
- ▶ If you are using a stairwell, be sure it is well-lit and you can quickly exit to a safe place.
- ▶ Stay on well-lit streets, in the centre of the sidewalk, away from bushes, doorways and parked cars, anywhere an attacker could hide. Cross the road if necessary.
- ▶ If you think someone is following you, turn around and check. **Let them know you are aware of their presence.** Do not go to your car or your house. Cross the street and go to a safe place, such as a store or restaurant.

## HOTEL SAFETY

- ▶ Make sure your reservations are guaranteed if you're arriving late.
- ▶ Purchase a travel lock or an alarm/motion detector for hotel room doors. These items are available from locksmiths.
- ▶ Use a business card (don't say your name out loud) or first initials when you check in. **Keep your name private.**
- ▶ Leave instructions not to give out your room number or your name.
- ▶ Get a room on an upper floor close to the elevator. Make sure you are away from stairwells and fire stairs/exits.
- ▶ Do not enter the room if you suspect someone is in it, if you are **being followed** or if someone is lingering near your door.
- ▶ Check your room phone to ensure it is working properly. If you are in a motel, try to get a room next to the office or the manager's unit. Keep all windows locked.

- ▶ If the hotel issues you an electronic access card for the room – upon turning the card in at the end of your stay, be sure to ask the desk clerk to delete your personal information from the card before you leave.

## **IF YOU'RE FLYING**

- ▶ Check for early and late shuttle bus service.
- ▶ Leave only your car key with parking lot attendants.
- ▶ Do not accept rides from people you have met on the airplane. **Be cautious about sharing taxis.**
- ▶ If you are renting a car at your destination during the winter, take a survival kit for winter driving. It should include a scraper, candles, warm clothes and candy for quick energy.

## **LEAVE CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS/ INFORMATION AT YOUR WORKPLACE**

- ▶ Tell staff or friends/family members if you work alone, where you are going and when you expect to arrive and leave. Include dates you will be in various locations. **Leave emergency contact numbers.**
- ▶ Establish a pre-arranged call-in procedure upon arrival and departure.
- ▶ Make sure anyone attending to your business, mail or phone machine does not give out information about your absence or travel plans.

# TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

## WHAT EMPLOYERS MUST DO PROTECT EMPLOYEES WORKING ALONE OR IN ISOLATION

**Please Note:** Employees under 16 years of age are not allowed to work between the hours of 11:00 pm and 6:00 am.

Employees under 18 years of age are not allowed to work alone between the hours of 11:00 pm and 6:00 am.

The workplace safety and health regulation also requires employers to identify and reduce the risks of working alone or in isolation. Once the risks have been identified, safe work procedures must be developed and put in place.

**“Working alone”** means: to work at a worksite as the only employee of the employer at that worksite and, when the employee is not directly supervised by the employer or another person designated as a supervisor by the employer.

**“Working in isolation”** means: working in circumstances where assistance is not readily available in the event of an injury, ill health or emergency.

### Here is what employers must do:

#### 1. Set up an effective communication system consisting of:

- ▶ Radio communication,
- ▶ Phone or cellular communication, or
- ▶ Any other method that provides effective communication given the risks involved, and

## 2. Include as many of the following procedures as is practical:

- ▶ A system of regular contact by the employer with the employee working alone or in isolation,
- ▶ Limit or prohibit specific activities,
- ▶ Establish minimum training or experience requirements or other standards of competency,
- ▶ Provide emergency supplies for the employee to use when traveling in extreme cold or other inclement weather conditions,
- ▶ Provide personal protective equipment.

## 3. Train employees in the safe work procedures.

For practical guidance on legal requirements under The Workplace Safety and Health Act and assistance in developing both a violence prevention policy for your workplace and safe work procedures for workers working alone or in isolation, call the Workplace Safety and Health Division at 204-945-3446 and ask for a copy of their *Guideline for Preventing Harassment and Violence, and Code of Practice for Workers Working Alone or in Isolation*.

# PREVENT VIOLENCE AT THE WORKPLACE

Under Manitoba's workplace safety and health regulation, employers are required to assess the risk of violence in the workplace. When a risk of violence in the workplace is identified, the employer must:

- ▶ Develop a written policy and provide information on how to:
  - Eliminate or minimize the risk of violence
  - Report a violence incident
  - Receive results of the incident investigation, etc.
- ▶ Train employees on the policy.

# TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

## WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

### INSTALL EXTRA PHONES AND ALARM SYSTEMS

- Pre-program phones to 911 or the local police emergency number.
- Install phones in isolated areas such as storage rooms.
- Have an alarm installed that rings in the workplace and in a neighbouring business or household.
- Attackers expect alarm buttons to be at the desk. **Place them elsewhere**, where staff can reach them and customers cannot set them off accidentally.
- Install several alarm buttons. Put them by doors, store rooms and coolers.
  - Employers are not allowed to charge employees, or deduct costs from wages for security improvements. For example, they can not deduct the cost of a lost panic button, or the cost of monitoring a panic button.

### INCREASE THE VISIBILITY IN WORK AREAS

- Install good outside lighting and train staff to check lights before dusk.
- Ensure the service desk is **well-lit and visible** through windows.
- Make sure windows are not obscured and passers-by can see in.
- Make sure there is a clear exit route from the service desk to the door.

### SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR AWARENESS

- Set up a business watch or mail watch program with neighbouring businesses.

- ▶ **Share information** with co-workers and neighbouring businesses whenever suspicious or criminal incidents occur.
- ▶ Develop a buddy system for employees to get to bus stops or their cars after work.

## **CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN**

Through consultation with the RCMP or Winnipeg Police Service, some retail businesses have greatly **reduced incidents** of robbery, shoplifting and other crimes that are a potential threat to the personal safety of staff and customers. Often, a few simple, low-cost changes in physical layout and operating procedures are all that is required to increase safety in the workplace.

Manitoba's 7-Eleven stores are among the leaders in promoting a **safer work environment**. Working with police, the company considered, and subsequently introduced, a number of changes in 7-Eleven stores that have significantly reduced the incidence of crime. In many cases these changes, while not extensive or costly, greatly increased the staff's ability to monitor their environment and improve their feeling of safety in the workplace.

Elements of 7-Eleven's proactive approach to safety include the following:

- ▶ maintaining small amounts of cash on the premises at all times and making potential thieves aware of this with prominently displayed signs
- ▶ raising the height of sales counters
- ▶ installing video monitors and surveillance cameras in all stores, as well as providing personal security alarms (worn around the neck) for all staff

# Business Security &

	YES	NO
Does your parking lot have adequate lighting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there adequate lighting near all entrance and exit doors/areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are your windows consistently clean and clear?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there an unobstructed view of the cash area from the street or the parking lot?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your business open 24 hours a day? If so, can you close and lock up if necessary?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have a side building ladder, can it be locked?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you make use of alternate access control devices such as magnetic locks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are interior doors locked when not in use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a secure area for employees to lock their personal belongings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have an alarm system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you regularly go over procedures on operating/testing the alarm system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you use video equipment throughout the premises?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you maintain low cash quantities at all times and make use of a drop safe or similar system?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have an emergency operations plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Safety Checklist

	YES	NO
Have you discussed your emergency operations plan with your employees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you established an incident-reporting system/procedure so all employees are made aware of suspicious situations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you regularly meet with staff to discuss risk assessment or concerns?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is a visitor policy/procedure in place? It might consist of sign-in logs, visitor badges and escorts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have an after-hours work policy, such as providing escorts to vehicles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have a policy of refusing to provide personal staff information to anyone who asks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you participate in a Business Watch Program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

List any unique security considerations that apply to your place of employment:

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**By answering these questions, you will have a snapshot of your business or office security and those areas that need to be addressed.**

For further information, contact the Winnipeg Police Service Crime Prevention Unit at 204-986-6322, your local police or local RCMP detachment.

# TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

## IN A ROBBERY OR OTHER PROPERTY CRIME

- **Never confront the robber.**
  - Do not argue, fight, chase, or resist the robber in any way. This will only make the robber nervous.
- **Co-operate with the robber.**
  - Let the robber know you want to do what you are ordered to do.
  - Remember, the robber may be even more nervous than you are.
  - Respond only when spoken to by the robber.
  - Keep conversation as brief as possible.
  - Use “yes” responses rather than “no”; shake your head up and down indicating agreement rather than disagreement.
- **Inform the robber ahead of time of any possible surprises, for example:**
  - the door is about to open;
  - someone is expected to come in;
  - someone is in the back room or somewhere else on the premises.
- **Help the robbery go as smoothly and quickly as possible.**
  - Be concerned about the safety of other staff and customers.

*Remember: robbers seldom hurt people who co-operate with them.*

## BASIC PREVENTION

Your risk of attack increases if you appear to be unaware of what’s going on around you. Learn to be aware and recognize risk. Increase your personal awareness everywhere.

- **Be observant and aware** of your surroundings. Walk with a purpose. Keep your head up, look around and directly at people to assess them. Make eye contact, but don’t stare.

- **Trust your feelings** when you feel something just isn't right.
- **Be alert.** Digging in a purse, wearing head-phones or struggling with a heavy briefcase, luggage or awkward clothing reduces your ability to be alert and thus prepared.
- **Have your keys ready.** As you approach your car or door, have the right key positioned to open the lock immediately.
- **Report any suspicious incidents** to employers or police.

*When you are out alone, you may also wish to consider carrying a personal safety alarm on your key ring, pinned to your clothing or worn around your neck.*

## **TAKING ACTION AGAINST A PERSONAL ATTACK**

Your most important defence tools are awareness and action. **Don't Freeze. Act.**

- ▶ If you are grabbed, don't freeze. Don't panic. Try to get attention. Yell loudly and repeatedly. Try shouting words like **FIRE, HELP, NO** and **STOP**. Blow a whistle, push a personal safety alarm, bang on something noisy. **Be loud and persistent.**
- ▶ **If anyone is nearby, give them instructions** to help you. Single out someone and send him or her for help - "You, in the red jacket, call the police." This will encourage bystanders to get help when they may not know what action to take.
- ▶ **If you decide to fight back**, remember there are many effective ways of responding to each type of attack. Prepare yourself to fight back, do whatever feels right to you. Try to imagine yourself responding successfully to different types of attack situations. Practise taking deep breaths to keep calm. Self-defence courses can teach you valuable skills and help you learn about vulnerable points on the body, but the best defence is to be vigilant and ready to respond.

*Only you can decide how to respond to a personal attack and how to respond if the attacker has a weapon. Use whatever force you feel is necessary to escape. Be ready to take action and get away. 15*

# KEEPING SAFE AT WORK

For more information, call:

- **your local police, RCMP detachment or crime prevention association.** They offer information programs and brochures for a variety of personal safety situations.
- **Manitoba Workplace Safety & Health,** phone 204-945-6848 or toll-free 1-800-282-8069. Website [www.manitoba.ca/labour/safety](http://www.manitoba.ca/labour/safety). They have comprehensive information about the *Code of Practice for Workers Working Alone or in Isolation*. The *Code* may be downloaded from their website.
- **Manitoba Employment Standards,** phone 204-945-3352 or toll-free at 1-800-821-4307. Website [www.manitoba.ca/labour/standards](http://www.manitoba.ca/labour/standards). They have comprehensive information on requirements for young workers and transportation between 12 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- **Manitoba Women's Directorate,** phone 204-945-3476 or toll-free 1-800-263-0234. Website [www.manitoba.ca/wd](http://www.manitoba.ca/wd)
- **Your local Business Watch Association.** These organizations exist in many communities. Your local chamber of commerce may be of assistance.

*For additional copies of this material, please contact the Women's Directorate.*

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**Our thanks to the British Columbia Ministry of Women's Equality and Ministry of Small Business, Tourism & Culture**

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The Women's Directorate gratefully acknowledges the invaluable assistance of:

Manitoba Justice Crime Prevention

7-Eleven Stores

Winnipeg Police Service

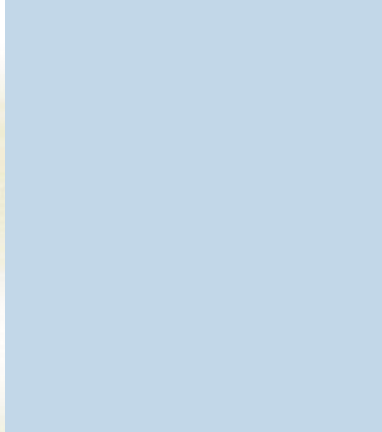
RCMP

Manitoba Workplace Safety & Health

Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

CIBC





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