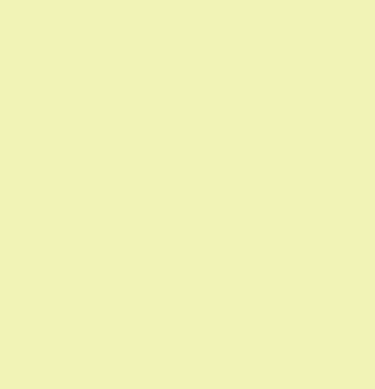


TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE

KEEPING SAFE AT WORK





TIPS FOR WORKING ALONE



KEEPING

SAFE

AT WORK

Manitoba communities are, on the whole, safe places in which to live and work. In any community, however, it's wise to follow basic rules of safety and **security** - things like locking your car when you leave it unattended in a parking lot. The same applies to the workplace.

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 be the target of a violent crime.

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

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 unfamiliar, 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.

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 WORK

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 deskclerk 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.
- Establish a pre-arranged call-in procedure upon arrival and departure.

Leave emergency contact numbers.

- Make sure anyone attending to your business, mail or phone machine does not give out information about your absence or travel plans.

WHAT EMPLOYERS CAN DO

Employers can - and must - discuss a safety plan with employees. Manitoba has a Workers Working Alone Regulation (105/88 R of the Workplace Safety and Health Act). It states in part:

Where a worker is working alone under circumstances which may result in injury, health impairment, victimization through criminal violence or other adverse conditions, the employer shall provide and implement a plan as a means of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of that worker from risks arising out of, or in connection with, activities in that workplace.

“**Working alone**” is defined as follows:

In this regulation, “*working alone*” means the performance of any work function by a worker who

(a) *is the only worker for the employer at that workplace at any time, and*

(b) *is not directly supervised by his or her employer, or another person designated as a supervisor by his or her employer, at any time.*

The key concepts contained in the Regulation for Workers Working Alone are:

- *the necessity of assessing all working alone situations to determine the conditions or circumstances which may result in misfortune to the workers working alone and attempt to reduce the probability of such misfortune; and*
- *the provision of a means of securing assistance for*

workers working alone in the event of injury or other misfortune.

Working alone does not necessarily mean an individual is the only employee on the premises; for example, it may include a situation where an individual works at an isolated worksite within a large, well-populated office building. For more information about this regulation, contact Manitoba Labour, Workplace Safety and Health Division, at (204) 945-6848.

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.

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?

Is there adequate lighting near all entrance and exit doors/areas?

Are your windows consistently clean and clear?

Is there an unobstructed view of the cash area from the street or the parking lot?

Is your business open 24 hours a day? If so, can you close and lock up if necessary?

If you have a side building ladder, can it be locked?

Do you make use of alternate access control devices such as magnetic locks?

Are interior doors locked when not in use?

Is there a secure area for employees to lock their personal belongings?

Do you have an alarm system?

Do you regularly go over procedures on operating/testing the alarm system?

Do you use video equipment throughout the premises?

Do you maintain low cash quantities at all times and make use of a drop safe or similar system?

Do you have an emergency operations plan?

Have you discussed your emergency operations plan with your employees?

SAFETY CHECKLIST

Yes

No

Have you established an incident-reporting system/procedure so all employees are made aware of suspicious situations?

Do you regularly meet with staff to discuss risk assessment or concerns?

Is a visitor policy/procedure in place? It might consist of sign-in logs, visitor badges and escorts.

Do you have an after-hours work policy, such as providing escorts to vehicles?

Do you have a policy of refusing to provide personal staff information to anyone who asks?

Do you participate in a Business Watch Program?

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

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.

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-defense 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.

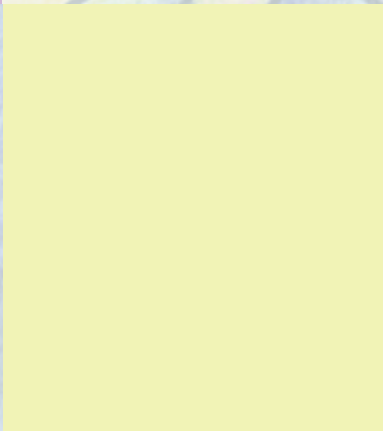
KEEPING SAFE AT WORK

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**, (204) 945-6848. They have comprehensive information about the Manitoba Regulation 105/88 R Respecting Workers Working Alone.
- **Manitoba Women's Directorate**, (204) 945-3476 or toll-free 1-800-263-0234. The Directorate can provide assistance in facilitating a Safety Audit of your business.
- **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 any Manitoba branch of CIBC or the Manitoba Women's Directorate.

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





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

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RCMP

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East St. Paul Police Department

Manitoba Workplace Safety & Health

Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba

CIBC



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