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## Heritage College Guidelines #7 Relating to Work-Alone Laboratory Situations

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**Subject:** Guidelines relating to working alone in the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room

**Administrator:** Associate Academic Dean

**Issuing Service:** Academic Services and Building Services

**Coming into Force:** March 30, 2010

**Revised:**

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Work-Alone Guidelines is to minimize the risks and ensure the health and safety of individuals required to work-alone in the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room at Heritage College.

Working in the Laboratory and Preparation Room involves the presence and manipulation of biohazardous materials and procedures that pose particular risks to individuals working alone. This is especially true in the event of an incident, accident, or emergency when an immediate response is required. Nevertheless, work-alone situations are sometimes unavoidable.

### **Application**

These guidelines apply to all persons working alone in the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The **Biosafety Committee** has the responsibility of regularly reviewing the Work-Alone Guidelines as they apply to the Heritage College Biology Laboratory and Preparation room. The Biosafety Committee must provide the appropriate information for individuals in work-alone situations and must report recommendations, concerns and incidents to the Health and Safety Committee.

The **Biosafety Officer**, as identified in Guideline #6 and for the purposes of these guidelines, has the responsibility of identifying and assessing work-alone situations

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occurring in the Biology Laboratory or Preparation Room to ensure that the Work-Alone Guidelines are being followed. The Biosafety Officer will also report concerns, incidents, accidents or emergencies with regard to the Work-Alone Guidelines to the Biosafety Committee and the Health and Safety Committee.

The **Individual** working in the Heritage College Biology Laboratory or Preparation Room has the responsibility to follow the Work-Alone guidelines outlined, in consultation with the Biosafety Officer. The individual must report any concerns, incidents, accidents or emergencies with regard to the Work- Alone Guidelines to the Biosafety Officer.

The **Contact person**, for the purposes of the present guidelines, is the designated person with whom the individual working alone will check-in or who will regularly check on the individual working alone. It is recommended that the contact person is an individual working in the Heritage College Information Office and that the alternate contact person is the Security Guard on duty.

### **Guidelines**

#### 1) Assessment

An assessment of each work-alone situation, using the Work-Alone Assessment Checklist( Appendix G7.1) must be completed by the Biosafety Officer, in consultation with the individual concerned, to determine the risk involved and the applicability of the Work-Alone Guidelines.

An individual is considered to be working alone if, during regular working hours, other staff and faculty will not be frequenting the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room for periods longer than one hour. Questions assessing the risks of working alone are found in appendix G7.1 and must be addressed prior to proceeding in working alone in the Biology Laboratory or Preparation Room.

#### 2) Communication

Regardless of the risk involved in a work-alone situation, it is strongly recommended that individuals in a work-alone situation be provided with a means of emergency communication (e.g. cellular phone, panic alarm, beeper) with qualified persons who can respond immediately.

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If the Work-Alone Assessment indicates a risk that cannot be avoided, the following actions must be taken:

2.1 Notification – The individual will notify the designated contact person of their work-alone situation and provide information including their location, when they expect to arrive and leave and their contact information.

2.2 Check-in – The individual working alone will check-in with the designated contact person, or the contact person will check on the individual, at regular scheduled intervals in person or if not possible then by telephone. It is recommended that the frequency of check-in be no less than every hour.

Alternatively, the individual working alone may use a pager as an automated method of checking-in. The individual must signal their presence and confirm their safety on an hourly basis. The signal will be sent automatically to the contact person in the Information Office who will be notified in the event that a check-in is missed.

- In the event of an incident, accident or emergency while working alone, the individual working-alone must communicate immediately with the contact person and follow the emergency action plan (refer to Health and Safety policies) or spill procedures (refer to Biosafety manual).
- The contact person must follow immediately the emergency action plan (refer to Health and Safety policies) if the individual working-alone fails to check-in or if upon check-in, the contact person becomes aware of an incident, accident or emergency.

### **ALTERNATIVE GUIDELINES FOR CUSTODIAL STAFF**

The custodial staff is permitted to carry out their duties in the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room outside of regular working hours. Appropriate training with regard to the hazards present in the laboratory is required and a check-in system is to be established with Building Services.

### **Revision**

These guidelines will be reviewed every 5 years or when deemed necessary.

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### Glossary

**Assessment of Risk:** For documentation purposes, this is defined as the process of defining the biohazard risks in the Biology laboratory and Preparation Room at Heritage College.

**Biosafety**, as defined by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), is “the application of knowledge, techniques and equipment to prevent personal, laboratory and environmental exposure to potentially infectious agents or biohazards” (Government of Canada, 2008).

**Biohazardous** material is all material that falls under Class D, Division 3 of the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), and includes bacteria, their toxic metabolites, blood and body fluids that may be used in the Biology Laboratory at Heritage College.

**Containment Level:** The combination of physical and operational requirements necessary to work with a particular agent or to perform a particular procedure or manipulation safely.

**Environmental Protection:** Protection of the general working environment and the exterior environment from contamination originating within the work space.

**Hazardous Material:** Any substance or mixture of substances having properties capable of producing adverse effects on the health or safety of a human being.

**Hazardous Occurrence:** An unexpected or unplanned event where personal injury or property damage has or could have occurred. This includes the definitions of an accident, incident, occupational illness or injury and environmental spills/releases.

**Microorganism:** A microscopic organism, such as bacterium, protist, yeast.

**Regular working hours** are the Heritage College hours in which staff and faculty are readily available to assist individuals working in the laboratories. Regular working hours are from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday to Thursday and 7:30 to 5:00 Friday (Information Office hours).

**Risk Group 2:** (moderate individual risk, limited community risk). This group includes pathogens that can cause human disease but, under normal circumstances, are unlikely to be a serious hazard to health laboratory workers, the community, livestock, or the

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environment. Laboratory exposures rarely cause infection leading to serious disease; effective treatment and preventive measures are available and the risk of spread is limited. Organisms in Risk Group II require containment level II facilities.

**Workplace Hazardous Materials Identification System (WHMIS):** A Canadian system developed to protect workers by providing information about hazardous materials in the workplace. It addresses controlled products, labelling, information disclosure, and worker education. WHMIS is implemented by a series of federal, provincial and territorial acts and regulations.

### **Related Documents**

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with:

- Heritage College Administrative Procedure #7 Relating to Hazardous Material – Identification, Storage and Handling
- Heritage College Administrative Procedure #8 Relating to Safety – Locking Out and Tagging
- Heritage College Administrative Procedure #9 Relating to Safe Disposal/Recycling of Hazardous Waste
- Heritage College Administrative Procedure #10 Relating to Safety – Disposal of Sharp Items
- and Needles
- Procedure #11 Relating to Eyewash Stations
- Guideline #6 Relating to Biosafety

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Appendix G7.1

### HERITAGE COLLEGE WORK-ALONE ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Biosafety Officer: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff/Faculty: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Consultation: \_\_\_\_\_

The following checklist was developed to ensure that any staff or faculty who are required to work-alone in the Heritage College Biology Laboratory or Preparation Room has consulted with the Biosafety Officer to assess the risk of their work-alone situation and to implement the appropriate procedures as outlined in the Work-Alone Guidelines in the Heritage College Biosafety Manual. An individual is working alone if, during regular working hours, other staff and faculty will not be frequenting the Biology Laboratory and Preparation Room for periods longer than one hour.

		Y	N	N/A	GUIDELINES
<b>WORKING HOURS</b>					
1.	Will the individual be working outside of regular working hours (Information office hours)?				**If the answer is <b>YES</b> , working alone is <b>prohibited</b> .
2.	Will the individual not be in contact with other staff or faculty for periods longer than one hour?				**If the answer is <b>YES</b> , proceed to the next section.
<b>WORKPLACE</b>					
3.	Have the risks and hazards in the workplace been assessed and properly managed according to the Biosafety Manual Guidelines?				**If the answer is <b>NO</b> , working alone is <b>prohibited</b> until adequate assessment and management of risks and hazards in the workplace.
4.	Is the appropriate personal protective equipment and other necessary equipment available and in working order?				
<b>TRAINING</b>					
Does the individual have adequate training and experience in the:					**If the answer is <b>NO</b> , working alone is <b>prohibited</b> until the individual receives the appropriate and adequate training.
5.	materials being used?				
6.	procedures being carried out?				
7.	appropriate emergency protocols?				

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MATERIALS AND METHODS					
8.	Do the materials or methods with which the individual will be working pose an increased risk to the safety of that individual?				**If the answer is <b>YES</b> , working alone is considered a risk and the procedures outlined in the Work-Alone Guidelines must be followed.
9.	Will the individual be working with biohazardous materials?				
10.	Will the individual be working with corrosive, flammable, poisonous or explosive materials?				**If the answer is <b>YES</b> , working alone is considered a risk and the procedures outlined in the Work Alone Guidelines must be followed.
11.	Will the individual be carrying out hazardous experiments (e.g. high temperatures)?				
12.	Will the individual be working with many tubes of hazardous materials?				

BSO Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Staff/Faculty Position \_\_\_\_\_

\*Checklist to be kept on file with Biosafety Officer and Human Resources.