

OHS Policy No. 1/99

**OHS POLICY FOR WORK AND STUDY
DURING TIMES WHEN EMERGENCY
RESPONSE IS LIMITED**

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1. BACKGROUND

There are specific risks associated with working and studying on campus outside normal working hours due to the lack of immediate assistance in the event of an accident or sudden illness. Outside of the normal span of working hours, the emergency response of the university, both at campus and departmental level, is limited. Campus staff trained to provide assistance in the case of a medical emergency (campus health services and first aiders), or to evacuate buildings, are less likely to be present outside normal working hours.

The Vice Chancellor and Monash University Occupational Health & Safety Policy committee have approved the following guidelines for staff and students who find that work or study on campus is essential at times when emergency response is limited.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Definitions:

2.1.1 Work or study after hours

For the purposes of this policy, work or study when emergency response is limited is defined as work or study undertaken on campus outside normal working hours. This will normally be between 1700 and 0845 on weekdays and at any time on weekends and university holidays. For the remainder of this policy, work or study at these times will be referred to as after hours work.

2.1.2 Working or studying alone

Working or studying alone is defined as work or study carried out in an area where normal means of contact (e.g. verbal or sight) with other persons are not available.

2.2 Exclusions:

This policy does not apply to on-campus university residences.

IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 The objectives of these implementation procedures are to ensure, as far as practicable, the safety and well being of staff and students who work after hours at Monash University.

3.2 The responsibility for implementation of these procedures rests with the Heads of Cost Centres. It is expected that the appropriate zone OHS committees will provide advice and feedback to Heads on actions needed to comply with this policy. These groups will be able to seek advice from Occupational Health, Safety & Environment.

4. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFTER HOURS WORK

4.1 With the exception of honours students, undergraduate students must not work in laboratories after hours unless a member of staff of Monash University is present. Low risk study tasks such as data analysis, viewing of microscope slides and specimens and study in computer laboratories are exempt from this requirement.

- 4.2 Approval of work after hours must be in accordance with any applicable award or agreement.
- 4.3 Supervisors must obtain authorisation from the Head of Department, Dean, Director or Manager of the area before giving permission for staff members, honours and postgraduate students and visitors to have access to buildings after hours.
- 4.3.1 This authorisation is provided by:
- Provision of a swipe card or other security access system; or
 - Provision of the names of staff and students permitted access after hours to Security ('Persons Permitted After Hours Access' form) by the Head of the Cost Centre.
- 4.3.2 Persons working after hours must carry their staff or student identification card to establish their entitlement to be in the building after hours. Persons who are located by Security in buildings after hours that are not on the after hours access list or on the security access system will be asked to leave the building.
- 4.4 Each department, building or area should have an after hours logbook.
- 4.4.1 The advantages of this system are that:
- Those who sign the book will be aware of other occupants of the building who signed the logbook before them; and
 - Security and Emergency Services will be informed of the locations where staff and/or students may be located after hours.
- 4.4.2 After hours study in libraries or lectures and tutorials conducted by a member of staff of Monash University after hours are exempt from the requirement to use a logbook.
- 4.4.3 Staff or students who enter or remain in the building/area after hours should sign the after hours logbook and record the time of arrival, the intended location, and the time of expected departure. When leaving the building/area, the person should sign out.
- 4.4.4 If an after hours logbook is used, the head of department, school or centre is responsible for placing, maintaining and reviewing the use of the logbook and for ensuring, as far as is practicable, that staff and students comply with this procedure.
- 4.4.5 In areas where more than one department, school or centre shares a building, the location and maintenance of the after hours logbook will be decided by agreement among the heads of the areas.
- 4.4.6 A system which records the presence and location of staff and students working in the building or area after hours may be used as an alternative for the after hours logbook.
- 4.5 When working after hours, staff and students may wish to notify Security of their location when they arrive and of their departure.
- 4.6 Heads of Cost Centres must ensure that staff and students who work after hours are familiar with, and follow, all after hours and emergency procedures. Further information about the Monash University security bus service and personal safety issues is available in the Personal Safety Brochure distributed by Security.
- 4.7 In the event of an emergency after hours, the standard procedures are as follows:
- Ensure that you are safe at all times. Do not place yourself at risk.
 - Raise the alarm.
 - Obey the evacuation signal.
 - Remain at the assembly area so that you can be accounted for.
- It may be advisable to have staff and students who require after hours access read the emergency procedures specific to the area, and sign a register that they have read and understood them.

- 4.8 Persons working after hours should ensure that another individual knows of their whereabouts and of the time that they will be expected to return. Such individuals should be given instructions on how to contact Security in the event that the person does not return on time.
- 4.9 A risk assessment must be carried out on all after hours work planned, in accordance with the policy of the department, school or centre.
- 4.9.1 The risk assessment should take into account:
- The hazards associated with the procedures involved in the work;
 - The experience and training of the individual undertaking the planned work;
 - The number of people present in the area after hours.
- 4.9.2 Following risk assessment, each department, unit or centre must develop a catalogue of the types of work that can be carried out in each of the categories outlined in section 5.3 of this policy entitled '*Categories of after hours work*' that is specific to the activities which occur in their area. The considerations for this listing include, for example:
- Work involving substances too hazardous or dangerous to be used after hours.
 - Most chemical laboratory research involves substances for which the toxicity, explosivity and reactivity are unknown to the researcher. The researcher, together with the laboratory supervisor, should evaluate the quantity of material or the volume of the equipment and set specific limits for procedures to be carried out after hours.
 - The conditions that should apply to the use of high pressure equipment in the department, unit or centre after hours.
 - The conditions that should apply to the various types of animal handling procedures undertaken in the department, unit or centre after hours.
- 4.9.3 Section 5.3 contains examples of the types of activities in each category to assist with the development of a catalogue of the types of work that can be carried out after hours in each department, school or centre.
- 4.9.4 The conditions described for the category in this policy must then apply to the after hours work undertaken in each department, school or centre.

5. UNATTENDED EXPERIMENTS

- 5.1 Equipment, ovens and experiments should only be left running overnight when necessary.
- 5.2 Electrical equipment left on after hours should carry a '**Do not switch off**' notice, giving the name of the person leaving the equipment and contact details.
- 5.3 Routine, unattended experiments, which run after hours and which have been demonstrated to be low risk in accordance with section 3.8 of this policy, are exempt from the reporting provisions outlined in 4.4.
- 5.4 Each department, unit or centre should develop a system of reporting of unattended experiments that are in progress after hours. An example of a reporting system used by some departments includes:
- 5.4.1 Reporting on a card that remains with the experiment, giving the following information:
- 'Experiment in progress. Please leave on.'
 - Name and contact details of the person running the experiment.
 - The classes of substances involved in the experiment.
 - The potential hazards of the experiment in plain English.
 - The procedure to be followed in case of emergency including, where appropriate, the order of shutting down the experiment, e.g. turn off power, then water.

- 5.4.2 The experiment can also be entered into a book at a central point in the department, unit or centre by 4 p.m. of the day of the experiment, listing the details described in section 5.2.1 of this policy. A representative of the department, unit or centre should then notify Security before 5 p.m. of all unattended experiments.
- 5.5 Checks on apparatus for unattended experiments:
- 5.5.1 Before initial use and on redesign of apparatus to be used in unattended experiments, students must get the apparatus checked and the card initialled by their supervisor or an experienced worker before leaving for the day.
- 5.5.2 The person responsible for the experiment should attend when the apparatus is started. Frequent checking of the apparatus and/or experiment should then be carried out for a sufficient period to ensure that the apparatus is working well and to identify and rectify any problems.

6. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFTER HOURS WORK

- 6.1 This section details the categories of after hours work. Examples of types of work have been provided in each category to assist departments, schools and centres to develop a catalogue of the types of work that can be carried out after hours in each of the categories.
- 6.2 The recommendations detailed in each category are additional to those outlined in section 3. of this policy entitled '*General recommendations for after hours work*'.
- 6.3 **Categories of after hours work**
- 6.3.1 **Category I: Low risk - No supplementary conditions required**
- 6.3.1.1 No supplementary conditions are required in addition to the general recommendations outlined in section 3. of this policy entitled '*General recommendations for after hours work*' to carry out these activities after hours, i.e. staff and students are able to carry out these activities alone after hours.
- 6.3.1.2 Examples of activities in this category:
- * Desk work such as computer work, reading, thesis writing, data analysis, or calculations, where the desk is not situated in a laboratory.
 - * Desk work in a laboratory or studio where no laboratory work is underway.
 - * Assembling or modifying apparatus where there are no chemical or electrical hazards present.
 - * Routine laboratory/studio functions that are part of a standard operating procedure that has been demonstrated to be low risk in accordance with section 3.8 of this policy.
 - * Laboratory/studio work involving the use of small quantities (<500 mL) of chemicals that are known to be mildly toxic, irritant, corrosive, allergenic or flammable.
 - * Distillation of flammable solvents (≤ 1 L).
 - * Sample measurement in instrument rooms providing that the quantities of materials are small and that high pressure equipment is not used.
 - * Microscopic examination of prepared samples.
 - * Sampling and maintenance of tissue cultures.
 - * Accessing cool rooms (>0 °C)
 - * Delivery and set up of audio-visual equipment.

6.3.2 **Category II: Minor risk - Pre-arranged reporting schedule to an authorised person**

6.3.2.1 Staff and students are able to undertake these activities alone as long as a pre-arranged reporting schedule to an authorised person, e.g. their supervisor or Security, is in operation.

6.3.2.2 Work with animals:

Note: There have been occasions where people with no previous history of allergic reaction have collapsed with anaphylaxis on entry to an animal house.

6.3.2.2.1 A pre-arranged schedule must be in place with an authorised person for reporting arrival, at appropriate intervals during the work, and at departure.

6.3.2.2.2 Staff and students working in animal houses *alone* after hours who have exhibited **any** form of allergic reaction, however mild, must wear respiratory protection. Occupational Health, Safety & Environment must be consulted to obtain advice on the type and fitting of the respiratory protection to be used.

6.3.2.2.3 Specific concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual working with animals after hours should be referred to the university's Occupational Health Physician located in Occupational Health, Safety and Environment.

6.3.2.3 Examples of activities in this category:

- * Routine feeding, care, treatment and sampling of animals.
- * Standard surgical procedures on small animals (<15 kg live weight).
- * Euthanasia and post-mortem of small animals (<15 kg live weight).
- * Laboratory/studio work involving the use of intermediate quantities (<2.5 L) of chemicals that are known to be mildly toxic, irritant, corrosive, allergenic or flammable.
- * Distillation of flammable solvents (<2 L).
- * Routine use of unsealed radioisotopes of ≤ 1 MBq in a low level laboratory.
- * Use of electrophoresis equipment with safety interlock protection and, preferably, residual current device protection.
- * Use of equilibrated or calibrated phenol solutions. (*Note: Equilibration of phenol is included in Category IV of this section of this policy, requiring at least two people working together or in the same room.*)
- * Accessing roofs that have a parapet or safety rail of 900 mm in height.

6.3.3 **Category III: Medium risk - Regular contact with a co-worker or 'buddy'**

6.3.3.1 Before the supervisor approves this category of work, a co-worker or a 'buddy' must have been arranged to be present in the department, unit or centre for the period of time that the work will be undertaken.

- A co-worker or 'buddy' can only be a person who is authorised to be in the building after hours.
- If the co-worker or 'buddy' is inadvertently unable to be present in the building for the pre-arranged time, another co-worker or 'buddy' must replace them or the work must be discontinued.
- Co-workers or 'buddies' must check on each other's well being at appropriate intervals and at least every 30 minutes during the period that the work is being carried out.

6.3.3.2 Examples of activities in this category:

- * Laboratory/studio work involving the use of large quantities (>2.5 L) of chemicals that are known to be mildly toxic, irritant, corrosive, allergenic or flammable.
- * Distillation of flammable solvents (>2 L).
NB Stills that operate on a continuous basis must be assessed individually by the staff member, the safety officer and OHSE.
- * The use of naked flames associated with flammable solvents (<0.25 L) as used in biological laboratories.
- * Extended periods of work (>30 min.) in cool rooms (>0 °C).
- * Assembling or modifying of apparatus when there are chemical or electrical hazards present.
- * Use of electrophoresis equipment without safety interlock protection on opening or residual current device protection.
- * Work with closed and semi-closed X-ray equipment.
- * Routine use of unsealed radioisotopes (>1 MBq) in a low level laboratory.
- * Use of equipment containing Class 3 or visible Class 4 lasers that are not fully enclosed or that does not have an adequate beam stop. (*Note: 'Use' does not include realignment of the laser beam, which is covered in Categories IV and V of this policy.*)
- * Studio work in painting, drawing, tapestry, printmaking, ceramics, hot blown and cut glass, metalworking and sculpture area plaster work.
- * Experiments with small-scale quantities of molten materials.
- * Installation and fitting of audio-visual equipment.

6.3.4 **Category IV: High risk – At least two people working together or in the one room**

6.3.4.1 To approve this category of work the laboratory supervisor must have written confirmation from both the worker and co-worker or 'buddy' that they will be present for the duration of the work to be undertaken.

- A co-worker or 'buddy' can only be a person who is authorised to be in the building after hours.
- In this category, consideration must be given to the co-worker or 'buddy's' qualifications. The second person must be able to help if an emergency arises. At times, only being able to call for help is sufficient. At other times, the second person may need to have specific qualifications or skills or to be as well qualified as the principal researcher, e.g. for iodination the second person should be experienced in the technique.
- If the co-worker or 'buddy' inadvertently is unable to be present in the room for the pre-arranged time, another appropriate co-worker or 'buddy' must replace them or the work must be discontinued.

6.3.4.2 Examples of work in this category:

- * Euthanasia and post-mortem examination of large animals (>15 kg live weight).
- * Handling venomous reptiles, insects, arthropods or fish.
- * Accessing freezer rooms (<0 °C).
- * Working with or near, highly toxic or corrosive substances where there is a significant risk of exposure to the substance, taking into account the volume used, *except where these procedures have been included in Category V of this section of this policy: 'Work too hazardous to be undertaken after hours'.*
- * Equilibration of phenol.
- * Work with radioisotopes requiring the use of a medium level laboratory.

- * Iodination.
- * Phosphorylation.
- * Unpacking radioactive sources.
- * Work with open X-ray systems.
- * Realignment of Class 3 or Class 4 laser beams in the visible range.
- * Working with exposed energised electrical or electronic systems with powers exceeding 100VA and voltages exceeding 40 V, *providing that the co-worker or 'buddy' is trained in Emergency Life Support (Level 1 first aid) or higher.*
- * Operating equipment or machinery, including workshop machinery capable of inflicting serious injury, such as chainsaws, firearms, lathes and power saws.
- * Work in Art & Design workshops and studios classified by the faculty as medium of high risk, *except where these procedures have been included in Category V of this section of this policy: 'Work too hazardous to be undertaken after hours'.*
- * Climbing towers or ladders > 1.5m in height.
- * Working in environments not at atmospheric pressure, such as SCUBA diving.

6.3.5 **Category V:** *Work too hazardous to be undertaken after hours*

Examples of work in this category:

- * Work with hydrofluoric acid.
- * Experiments involving explosive and potentially explosive substances.
- * Accessing bulk liquid nitrogen storage areas.
- * Working with radionuclides requiring a high level laboratory in accordance with AS2243.4 (1994) Safety in laboratories, Part 4: Ionizing radiations.
- * Accessing radioactive waste stores.
- * Working with micro-organisms of Risk group 3 and higher, or which require the use of a PC3 facility.
- * Realignment of Class 3 or Class 4 laser beams which are outside the visible range.
- * Work with significant quantities of molten materials beyond small scale, experimental quantities.
- * Work with unguarded, high powered, fast-moving machinery or equipment.
- * In the Faculty of Art & Design, work in the design workshop equipped with wood working machinery and power tools, work with pneumatic tools and work in the sculpture studio foundry and casting area.
- * Work on roofs using a harness or safety-line system or without fall protection.
- * Work in confined spaces (including those with good egress) or in areas with limited egress.