

# Safety Moment

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## Non-virus Related Health and Safety Impacts of the Pandemic

University of Calgary | VP Services | Environment, Health and Safety

Published: June 2022



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The response to pandemic has introduced many changes, some of which have increased non-virus related health and safety risks. Managing these risks is accomplished by maintaining rigorous application of all aspects of the University's EHS management system. The university's environment, health and safety (EHS) team has made important changes to address the non-virus related health and safety impacts of the pandemic including those highlighted below.

# Increased Working Alone

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Working alone is a safety hazard given that a lone worker in distress may not receive assistance. With the significant reduction in the number of people on campus during the pandemic there will be more working alone in offices and laboratories in particular. The University introduced a new system at the start of the pandemic that calls for workers to receive authorization from their supervisor for working alone on campus and then establishes a check-in and check-out process.

# New Tasks

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The pandemic has changed some work tasks and introduced new ones with associated safety hazards. For example, during the pandemic, caretaker workers began using spray disinfectants that included working with new chemicals and wearing a backpack containing a canister of liquid disinfectant. At the start of the pandemic an email was sent to all supervisors reminding them of the need to conduct hazard assessments for all new or changed work tasks.

# Working at Home Related Ergonomic Hazards

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The location where employees work in their homes may include ergonomic hazards that do not exist at their campus workstation. To address these hazards, the University has provided videos and written materials on the COVID-19 website to provide guidance on establishing an ergonomically safe home workstation. The University has also engaged an ergonomic consulting company to conduct remote ergonomic assessments of an employee's home workstation.

# COVID-19 Distraction

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With increased focus on controlling the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, there may not be as much attention paid to non-COVID-19 hazards.

For example, when field research work is done a Field Level Hazard Assessment is required to be completed which should take into account COVID-19 hazards as well as all the other hazards associated with the work. A safety email was sent to all supervisors early in the pandemic which emphasized the importance of focusing on all workplace hazards. The university's Environment, Health and Safety team continues to support the university community to identify and address workplace hazards.