

POLICY STATEMENT

The Directors have prepared this guidance, to provide a framework for arrangements for lone workers on site and for teaching staff working out in the field. This guidance should form part of the Departmental Health and Safety arrangements. This guidance defines circumstances where lone working should be effectively prohibited, and identifies circumstances where it could be allowed, subject to comprehensive assessment of the risks involved.

POLICY RATIONALE

The rationale for this policy is to ensure that all employees understand what to do to minimize the risks of lone working.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS**CROSS REFERENCES and other RESOURCE MATERIAL**

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1.0 Background

The Directors have prepared this guidance, to provide a framework for arrangements for lone workers on site and for teaching staff working out in the field. This guidance should form part of the Departmental Health and Safety arrangements. This guidance defines circumstances where lone working should be effectively prohibited, and identifies circumstances where it could be allowed, subject to comprehensive assessment of the risks involved.

1.1 Definition

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Persons are considered to be working alone if they have neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon assistance. Lone working can occur

- During normal working hours at a remote location either within the normal workplace or off site
- When working outside normal working hours

Persons working from home should also be considered as lone workers.

2.0 Legislation

Although there is no legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management Health and Safety at Work Regulations still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

Employers have a legal duty to assess all risks to health and safety, including the risk of lone working. If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be put in place.

Employers also have a duty to provide

- Facilities for First Aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations
- Welfare under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations
- Suitable equipment and training in their use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations.

Employers must also report certain accidents suffered by employees, including violent incidents, under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

In certain high risk activities there may be specific prohibitions on working alone i.e.

- Entry into confined spaces where there may be inadequate ventilation i.e. tanks, manholes, pipes, ducts and flues, enclosed basement rooms.
- Use of ladders which cannot be secured and require footing by a second person.
- Use of dangerous machinery where there is a risk of entrapment, entanglement, crushing, impact or injury from cutting or shearing, stabbing or puncture i.e. woodworking machinery, abrasive wheels, food preparation equipment, plastics processing machinery.
- Work on or near live, electrical conductors. The Electricity at Work Regulations give as examples the following where it is likely that the person carrying out the work should be accompanied

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- Electrical work involving manipulation of live, uninsulated power conductors, say at 240 volts using insulated tools
 - Other work on or near bare live conductors where a person working on his her own would not be capable of undertaking the work safely without assistance in, for example, keeping other persons from the work area.
 - Work in laboratories using certain chemicals including flammable liquids, flammable gases, asphyxiants, toxic substances, corrosive substances.
 - Work involving the movement of cash or other valuables

3.0 Risk Assessment

Where a person may have to, or chooses to work alone, it is the responsibility of the head of Department to ensure that a detailed Risk Assessment form is completed by the research worker and the supervisor / project leader, for each work activity involving lone workers/fieldworkers. The following questions should be addresses in relation to risk assessing lone working: -

- Can one person adequately control the risks of the task?
- Are there any health issues that may affect the person working alone?
- Is the person competent to work alone?
- What additional training or information is required?
- How will the person be supervised?
- What are the emergency arrangements in place and are they suitable for lone working?

Special considerations will have to be made for any disabled lone workers.

The types of question which the assessor should ask are given in the list below:

1. Does the work involve any activities for which lone working is legally prohibited?
2. Do access and egress present any additional risk to the solitary worker?
3. Does the work involve manually handling objects which are too heavy or awkward for one person?
4. If hazardous substances are involved, can their use be adequately controlled by one person?
5. If machinery and equipment are in use, does their design allow safe operation by one person? For instance, do the controls require more than one person for safe operation?
6. If any temporary access equipment is used, can it be safely handled and used by one person?
7. Are there any medical conditions [e.g. diabetes] which would put a lone worker at greater risk whilst doing the work in question?
8. Does the person have any disabilities which would place him or her at greater risk when lone working?
9. Is there a risk of violence to the lone worker [e.g. handling cash or interviewing potentially violent people]?
10. Is a woman working alone at any increased risk?
11. Is a young person working alone at any increased risk?
12. Are emergency arrangements in place which are suitable for the lone worker?
13. Is there appropriate first aid provision for the lone worker?
14. If transport is required, does the method pose any increased risk for a lone person?

Once you have completed the evaluation of the risk, you must consider whether any additional control measures are required in order to reduce the risk sufficiently.

4.0 Control measures**4.1 Appropriate equipment and conditions**

Legislation requires that equipment must be selected to ensure that it is suitable for the intended use and conditions. All safety considerations must be taken into account where equipment is used by a lone worker and appropriate British, European and International standards should be complied with.

- Equipment must be suitable for safe use by a lone worker.
- If equipment is hired, confirmation must be sought that it meets the appropriate standards and has been properly maintained.
- Equipment must be checked and tested before use by the lone worker and at appropriate predetermined intervals during use.
- Equipment must be maintained in a safe state by competent persons and damaged equipment suitably repaired or taken out of service.
- Where equipment is used by a lone worker they must be trained and competent to use it on their own.

See Guidance on the Safety Inspection and Testing of Portable Electrical Appliances

Appropriate conditions are:

- There is a safe means of entry and exit to the workplace
- There is adequate illumination, heating and ventilation for the job to be carried out.
- All equipment, especially power tools and access equipment such as ladders, can be used safely by a lone worker
- Lifting operations can be performed safely by one person who has undertaken suitable manual handling training

4.2 Protective clothing

Adequate and appropriate protective clothing must be worn where necessary. It must be checked regularly, maintained in good condition and worn correctly as required by current legislation. Equipment complying with appropriate British, European and International standards must be used wherever practicable.

4.3 Permits to work

These are detailed written instructions provided by the employer on the performance of hazardous activities such as entry into confined spaces or electrical testing they should specify

- Check in arrangements
- Tests of communications equipment
- Length of the work period
- Suitable first aid equipment
- Equipment, tools and electrical safety checks
- Suitable personal protective equipment
- Suitable manual handling
- Arrangements in bad weather
- Exit to safety after job

4.4 Fitness to work alone

Medical fitness should not be a significant factor when considering typical office activities outside normal hours. However in other situations it may be necessary to check that lone workers have no medical conditions which make them unsuitable for working alone. Both routine work and foreseeable emergencies should be considered when assessing whether a person is medically fit to work alone. Emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual. When medical advice is necessary, the Occupational Health Service should be consulted.

- does the job impose any extra demands on the lone workers physical or mental stamina
- does the lone worker suffer from any illness that might increase the risk of the job.

4.5 Communication and signing in, mobile phones, alarms etc

Appropriate communications should be maintained with the lone worker especially when continuing supervision is required. The lone worker should be equipped with a means of two-way communication, a pager or personal alarm. The system should enable the worker to raise an instant alarm or be located accurately if assistance is required. Rooms used for confidential interviews should be equipped with a hidden alarm.

4.6 Information, Instruction and training

Sufficient training and information must be provided to the lone worker to enable them to identify hazards and take appropriate action to avoid them. They must be entitled to leave the workplace if there is serious and imminent danger.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore, need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced. Departments should therefore establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone and where appropriate when to stop and seek advice. All new members of staff joining the department should receive a short induction talk on personal safety issues relating to lone / fieldwork. Training must include the need to report any incidents which could effect their safety as such information is essential to the review of the adequacy of the working arrangements.

4.7 Transport

If working away from the workplace the lone worker must take extreme care when using transport whether it is their own, a hire vehicle or public transport. The worker should ensure they have adequate information as to the correct location of their work and a safe route to travel. Where using public transport they should ensure they have adequate information on timetables and know when the service terminates especially at night. If using car parks use ones that are well lit, do not leave valuables visible within the car. Where the lone worker is away procedures for the following will have to be defined

- How long should the work take and how often should the worker report in
- Has the worker a safe means of travel to and from the location, especially out of hours

Where staff are expected to use their own cars for traveling to and from locations, the main risk is from the possibility of breaking down in an isolated area especially where cars maybe poorly maintained. Whether the employee has access to breakdown cover must also be taken into consideration in the risk assessment. This must be taken into consideration when the risk assessment is carried out, RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) have published a guide to managing road risk, see bibliography. The employer has a responsibility to ensure that the car used is suitable, even when the employee uses their own car. They should ask to see the MOT, insurance and license.

Special precautions will have to be considered if the worker is transporting hazardous items e.g. chemicals, cylinders etc. suitable warning signs must be displayed on the vehicle and COSHH information should be carried.

5.0 Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established in departments and the appropriate persons given clear and concise training and instructions on how to implement them. Similar information should be given to contractors or service engineers who maybe working alone.

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period. In addition, it maybe necessary to consider

- Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers.
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone worker and a member of supervisory or the security office is maintained using either a telephone or radio
- Be aware of areas to be visited where it may not be possible to get a mobile signal and ensure worker has alternative means of making contact, phone card, change.
- Automatic warning devices which raise the alarm in an emergency and are activated by the absence of activity from the lone worker.
- The needs of disabled persons when working alone e.g. safe evacuation for wheelchair users and alternative alarm systems for the hearing impaired.
- Only lifts fitted with alarms should be used by lone workers

Incident reporting

Lone workers must be familiar with the company incident reporting system. It is essential that all incidents and near misses are reported and investigated by the department as soon as possible. Serious incidents will have to be reported to the appropriate authorities therefore it is essential to obtain as much information as possible. Workers must be aware of emergency arrangements and how to contact the emergency services.

Appendix 1 CHECKLISTS FOR LONE WORKING

Points for Managers

- Make informal inspections to make sure the workplace is safe and the lone worker is working safely
- Ask yourself if you would feel safe in that situation
- Check that all equipment is properly maintained and appropriate records are kept
- Make sure all relevant risk assessments and safe working procedures are produced and readily at hand
- If hazardous substances are in use, make sure the relevant Material Safety Data Sheets are easily available in the laboratory
- Make sure that the lone workers are fully aware of all of the local rules, including the out-of-hours procedures
- Check the signing in book for out of hours to make sure that the workers are signing in and out and are only those authorised by the Head of Department
- Make sure that you have a reliable system for contacting the lone worker and checking that he or she are safe.
- Consider what emergency situations could arise and ensure that you have the procedures in place to cater for them.
- Talk informally with the lone workers to find out whether they have any safety concerns about working alone and to reassure them, that you do not want them to be put at any greater risk through working alone

Points for Staff**Out-of-Hours**

- Make sure someone knows when you arrive at work, where you will be and when you leave
- Don't do anything which you feel may put you in danger. If you are at all unsure what to do, or feel that the work requires more than one person to be done safely, leave it until there is someone else around
- Report any dangerous incident, including 'near misses', to your superior
- Make sure you know and follow the relevant risk assessments, safe working procedures and guidelines for the work, including those relating specifically to the lone working situation
- Make sure you know the appropriate accident and emergency procedures
- If you are injured or become ill, stay calm, remember your training and contact Security for assistance

Fieldwork

- Make sure that you have all of the necessary safety-related equipment with you and that it is appropriate for the conditions. This includes your personal clothing, survival aids and a means of contact, such as radio or mobile phone.
- Check your route beforehand and make sure you know where you are going
- Check any equipment you will be using to ensure that it is in safe working order
- Make sure someone knows when you leave for the fieldwork site, where you will be, when you leave for home and when you arrive
- Check the site on arrival to make sure that it is safe to work there. You should do this, even if you have been there before, since there may be changes. Don't do anything which you feel may put you in danger, especially because you are on your own. If you are at all unsure what to do, or feel that the work requires more than one person to be done safely, leave it until there is someone else around. Tell your supervisor about the problem
- Report any dangerous incident, including 'near misses', to your superior
- Make sure you know and follow the relevant risk assessments, safe working procedures and guidelines for the work, including those relating specifically to the lone working situation
- Make sure you know the appropriate accident and emergency procedures
- If you are injured or become ill, stay calm, remember your training and use the communication system provided [e.g. mobile phone or radio] to call for assistance

Visit to a home

Together with the supervisor / line manager, the lone worker must:-

- Undertake a risk assessment of the work activity to be carried out.
- Make contact with subject to arrange suitable visit time and to explain the purpose and content of the visit and answer any initial queries they may have. Make clear beforehand:
 - If any equipment is to be left in the home
 - If the interview is going to ask searching questions
- Decide on means of transport to the home and ensure that they have adequate information on safe routes and if using public transport have information on timetables etc. Be aware of any social tensions in the area to be visited.
- Ensure that they have means of communicating with their supervisor / line manager e.g. mobile phone, being aware of black spots.
- Have a clear itinerary of the visit including appointment times and the names, addresses and contact numbers of the subjects to be visited and that arrangements are in place for communicating with the supervisor / line manager. This must include an agreed procedure for

making contact following the procedure to ensure the supervisor / line manager knows the lone worker is safe.

- Be familiar with procedures for what to do in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that they have a identification badge to show to the subject.
- At the home, try to sit close to a door out of it.
- Leave the house if at any point they feel uncomfortable or threatened.
- Arrange a debriefing session with the supervisor following the visit if appropriate to discuss if the control measures in place were adequate.

Transport checklist**Car**

Make sure the car you are driving has been regularly serviced, check tyres, oil, petrol
Make sure you have access to a national breakdown service
Plan your route in advance
Tell people your destination and expected time of arrival
Carry change and a phone card and mobile if you have access to one.
Keep possessions out of site
Keep doors locked and windows closed wherever possible.
Do not pick up hitchhikers
Keep a map handy incase you have to stop for directions
Always lock the car and keep everything in the boot
If returning to car after dark ensure parked in a well lit area
Have your key ready on returning to the car

Taxis

If you cannot hail a licensed cab carry the number of a reputable company
Where possible book taxis in advance, do not get into a cab that you haven't asked for

Train

Wait where it is well lit and there are plenty of people
Stand well back from the platform edge
Avoid compartments
Try to sit with other people
If you feel uneasy don't be afraid to get off at next stop
If you feel threatened or there is an incident act immediately, alert guard or driver, pull emergency alarm
Where possible travel at busy times