

LONE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT – GUIDANCE NOTES

This guidance is designed to provide lone workers and their line managers with practical advice to assist in preparing for a lone worker situation and meet legislative responsibilities under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. In particular, it can be used to:

- raise staff awareness of safety issues relating to lone working
- ensure that lone working is risk-assessed in an appropriate way and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce the risk, so far as is reasonably practicable
- help staff recognise risks and provide practical advice on safety when working alone, including, where appropriate, how to use technological solutions
- identify the organisational structures, communication links, and those with responsibilities to support lone workers if they need assistance
- encourage full reporting and recording of any adverse incidents relating to lone working.

What is Lone Working?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. This may include those who work alone in a specific area or building (e.g. cleaners, security, library workers, etc.) or may include mobile workers, who work alone but in a number of locations (e.g. maintenance, cleaners, drivers, Staff / Students carrying out research surveys, those who visit external organisations, e.g. school liaison personnel)

Hazard Identification

Identify all hazards specific to the lone working activity; evaluate the risks (low / medium / high); describe all existing control measures and identify any further measures required.

Specific hazards should be assessed on a separate risk assessment form and cross-referenced with this document where appropriate.

Some hazards to consider may include:

- Workplace: Identify hazards specific to the workplace / environment, which may create particular risks for lone workers, e.g. remote areas, laboratories, workshops, confined spaces. Consider access requirements, transport and parking arrangements, etc.
- Process: Identify hazards specific to the work process, which may create particular risks for lone workers, e.g. work on electrical systems, work in the community.
- Equipment: Identify hazards specific to the work equipment, which may create particular risks for lone workers, e.g. manual handling, operation of essential / emergency controls.
- Violence: Identify the potential risk of violence. Is there a history of violence or threats to Staff?

- Individual: Identify hazards specific to the individual, which may create particular risks for lone workers e.g. medical conditions, disabilities, female employees, expectant mothers, age, inexperienced, etc.
- Work Pattern: Consider the lone worker's work pattern and how it relates to those of other workers, in terms of both time and geography.
- Other: Specify any additional hazards particular to the lone work.

Control Measures

Identify existing control methods, assess their effectiveness and specify any additional controls that may be necessary. Consider alternative work methods, training, supervision, protective equipment / devices, etc.

Some measures to consider may include:

- Buddy system (see below)
- Specific information, instruction and training (e.g. emergency procedures, out-of-hours procedures, personal safety training, etc).
- Increased communication systems / procedures (e.g. regular pre-arranged contact by e.g. mobile phone)
- Increased supervision
- Increased security (e.g. cctv, secure access, personal alarms)
- Increased lighting at entrances, exits, car parks

Persons at Risk

Identify all those who may be at risk. It is important that these individuals are made aware of the outcome of the risk assessment and informed of all necessary control measures.

Training

Identify the level and extent of training required, taking into account the nature of the lone working activity. Consider the knowledge and experience of individuals, particularly young and new workers. Lone workers should be given information to deal with normal everyday situations but should also understand when and where to seek guidance or assistance from others, i.e. unusual or threatening situations, etc.

Supervision

The extent of supervision required will depend upon the level of risks involved and the ability and experience of the lone worker. A few examples of supervisory measures which may be useful in some circumstances include:

- Periodic telephone contact with lone workers,
- Periodic site visits to lone workers,
- Regular contact (telephone, radio, etc),
- Automatic warning devices, e.g. motion sensors, etc.,
- Manual warning devices, e.g., panic alarms, etc.,
- End of task / shift contact (i.e. returning keys)

Buddy System

To operate the buddy system, managers must ensure that a lone worker nominates a buddy. This is a person who is their nominated contact for the period in which they will be working alone.

The nominated buddy will:

- be fully aware of the movements of the lone worker
- have all necessary contact details for the lone worker attempt to contact the lone worker if they do not contact the buddy as agreed
- follow the agreed local escalation procedures for alerting their senior manager and Security if the lone worker cannot be contacted or if they fail to contact their buddy within agreed and reasonable timescales.

The buddy must understand their role and what the procedures and requirements are. Contingency arrangements should be in place for someone else to take over the role of the buddy in case the nominated person is unavailable, for example if the lone working situation extends past the end of the nominated person's normal working day or shift,

Additional Information

Identify any additional information relevant to the lone worker, including emergency procedures, out-of-hours contact details, first aid provisions, etc.

Recording the Assessment

It is important that departments maintain records of risk assessments for inspection. Obtaining a signature from individuals to confirm that they have read and understood the information contained in the risk assessment is advised and should be implemented at the discretion of the individual's line manager/head of department.

Sources of Guidance & Advice

- [Working Alone in Safety](#), Ref: IND G 73 (rev), Health and Safety Executive.
- [The Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#) offers a range of guidance on various aspects of personal safety in the workplace including lone working.
- [Violence at Work](#), Ref: INDG 69, Health and Safety Executive.