



UNITED KINGDOM

Workplace Health and Safety Guide



Lone Working

Provided by:

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Who is a Lone Worker?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as ‘those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision’. Lone workers spend a large percentage of their working time without interacting with other workers and can face greater risks and hazards than traditional workers do. Lone working hazards include violence and abuse from third parties, lack of assistance in an accident and health issues resulting from lack of training or supervision. By working together with your lone workers, many of the lone working risks and hazards can be eliminated or reduced.

The following are common examples of lone working:

Lone Working in Fixed Establishments	Lone Working in Mobile Environments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working in premises such as small workshops, petrol stations, kiosks or shops. – Working from home. – Working separately from others in factories, warehouses, research and training establishments, leisure centres and fairgrounds. – Working outside normal hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working in construction, plant installation, maintenance and repair work, vehicle recovery, or painting and decorating. – Working in agriculture and forestry. – Working in service industry positions, such as postal staff, social workers, home helps, drivers, engineers, sales representatives and nurses.

Employer Responsibilities

As an employer, you are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work for all of your employees, including lone workers. This means that duties under health and safety legislation, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (2000 in Northern Ireland), apply to lone workers. Employers also need to be aware of the standards and laws that apply to their work activities and assess whether they can meet those legal obligations for their lone workers. Once risks are assessed, employers need to take steps to control or avoid lone working risks.

Employers should do the following:

- Conduct a risk assessment.
 - Assess risks faced by lone workers and any person who may be affected by their work.
 - Involve staff or representatives when undertaking the risk assessment process.
 - Review risk assessments annually or when a significant change takes place.
 - Record significant findings of all risk assessments (for employers with five or more employees).
- Make sure control measures are in place.

- Control measures include instruction, training, supervision and issuing protective equipment.
 - Make arrangements to provide help or back-up when a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be conducted safely by a lone worker.
- Consult with your lone workers on health and safety matters.
 - Help ensure that all relevant hazards are identified and that appropriate, proportionate control measures are in place.

Special Considerations for Lone Workers

Creating a healthy and safe working environment for lone workers can be different from what you typically do for your traditional workers. Lone workers may need special attention when planning safe working arrangements. The following are issues employers should consider when planning health and safety precautions for their lone workers.

Issue 1: Can One Person Adequately Control the Risks?

Employers should take into account normal work and foreseeable emergencies, such as fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Identify these situations and ask questions such as:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Can all machinery, goods and temporary equipment be handled safely by one person?
- Are there any chemicals or hazardous substances being used that may pose a threat to the worker?
- Does the work require more than one person to lift objects or operate essential controls?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Is the individual particularly at risk or more vulnerable than others? This can include people with medical conditions, new trainees, and pregnant or disabled workers.
- Is English the first language spoken? If not, are suitable arrangements made to ensure clear communication, especially in an emergency?

Issue 2: How Important is Training?

Training is particularly important because there is limited supervision to control, guide and help lone workers in emergency situations. Employers should establish emergency procedures and train their workers on them. Adequate first aid supplies and training may also be needed. Training will help ensure that workers are sufficiently experienced and fully understand the risks and precautions of lone working. Lone workers need to be able to deal with circumstances that are new or unusual, handle possible violence or aggression, and respond to emergencies. Make sure to set limits on what tasks can and cannot be done while working alone.

Issue 3: How Do I Supervise the Lone Worker?

Even though lone workers are not subject to constant supervision, employers must still ensure their health and safety at work. The extent of supervision depends on the risks involved and the ability of

the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues. The greater the risks evaluated during the risk assessment, the greater level of supervision is required. Procedures must be in place to monitor the health and safety of lone workers. This can include:

- Carrying out health and safety checks when reviewing the progress and quality of work, such as during periodic site visits.
- Providing guidance to workers in situations where there is uncertainty.
- Making sure new workers undergo proper training and are accompanied at first.
- Maintaining regular contact between the lone worker and supervisor by using mobile phones, radios, email, etc.
- Using automatic warning devices and other devices to raise an alarm in the event of an emergency.
- Creating checks to ensure the lone worker has returned to his or her base or home once the task is complete.

For further guidance on lone working, refer to this HSE [leaflet](#).