



Leicester
City Council

Lone Working Health & Safety Management Standard Issue 3 (May 2013)

Introduction

This document contains corporate standards and guidance on the management of risks arising from lone working activities. It is the responsibility of managers to ensure that any lone working activities or operations are managed in line with this document in any area under their control.

This document must be read in conjunction with any additional guidance specific to divisional issues or activities.

Managers' Checklist – Lone Working

The checklist given below identifies key actions involved in managing the health and safety risks arising from lone working. Further information on each of these points is contained in this document, and a flowchart outlining action and guidance can be found at **Appendix A**.

1. Have all lone working activities been identified?
2. Has a risk assessment of these lone working activities been carried out?
3. Has the risk assessment identified any activities that are not safe to be carried out by a lone worker?
4. Have any additional control measures been identified and have these control measures been implemented?
5. Are procedures in place for dealing with incidents, accidents and emergencies?
6. Has a written lone working procedure been developed and communicated to lone workers?
7. Have employees been trained in strategies for preventing and managing violence, and keeping safe?
8. Are control measures and lone working procedures monitored and reviewed?

Lone Working Activities

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'. Lone workers may be found in a range of situations:

- People in fixed establishments where:
 - Only one person works at the premises at any one time.
 - People work separately from others, e.g. in isolated areas of a site.
 - People work outside normal hours, e.g. maintenance staff.
 - People who work from home.
- People who work away from a fixed base. Such work may include:
 - Parks maintenance,
 - Cleaning
 - Social work
 - Driving
 - Architects/Engineers

Identifying Lone Working Tasks and Activities

The first stage in the risk assessment process is to identify known and foreseeable lone working tasks and activities.

Examples of these task or activities could be:

- A Premises Officer in a remote part of a building such as a plant room;
- A cleaner working in a public building such as a block of flats;
- An employee visiting a client in their own home;
- An employee carrying out an inspection of a shop, restaurant or other premises;
- An employee investigating a complaint, such as noise or fly tipping.

It is recognized that hazards presented by a particular lone working task may vary. Risks arising from contact with members of the public will differ, for example, where there are members of the public with a known history of violence.

Lone Working Risk Assessment

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, a risk assessment of lone working tasks **must** be carried out.

Lone working issues may be considered as part of an overall risk assessment of a job role or activity. However, where lone working has not been considered as part of other risk assessments, a specific risk assessment must be carried out. To assist in this process a Lone Working Risk Assessment Form is provided with this guidance. The significant findings of the risk assessment should be recorded and shared with employees affected.

Managers should also ensure that all other risk assessments take into account any lone working. For example: Manual Handling, COSHH, New & Expectant Mothers and Young Persons.

Can Lone Working Activities Be Carried Out Safely?

Once lone working tasks have been identified, the next stage in the process is to determine if a lone worker can carry out the activities safely. The issues that need to be considered include:

- Does the place of work present an increased risk?
- Home visits – does the client have a history of violence?
- Do the places where the person will work present a special hazard, because of the nature of the area itself? (This may be a particular issue for maintenance and construction personnel, for example confined spaces).
- Are employees of a particular, gender, age or race more at risk if they work alone?
- Can all the plant, equipment, substances and other goods be safely used and handled by one person?
- Is there a known risk of violence / aggression?
- Is there a means of communication and/or summoning assistance?
- Is there a system in place for contacting and tracing those who work alone to check they are safe?

Please note. Separate guidance is available on managing violence and aggression.

Tasks that are unsafe to be carried out by a lone worker

Where the risk assessment identifies that it is not possible for a task to be carried out safely by a lone worker, even with all reasonably practicable controls in place, the task should not be undertaken alone.

Are individuals medically fit to work alone?

Some individuals may have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. These may include health conditions such as unstable epilepsy or diabetes. The consideration of medical conditions should include both routine activities and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

Please contact Human Resources (HR) for further guidance on obtaining Occupational Health advice.

Control Measures

Safe Working Procedures

Although working alone may not introduce any new hazards, the risk may differ significantly when a task is undertaken unaccompanied. Lone workers should not be at more risk and extra risk control measures may be required to eliminate or reduce risks to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable. The control factors that can be considered are given below:

- Having reporting systems to ensure that the whereabouts of staff are known;

- Joint working with others for high-risk activities;
- Dropping by to check on the lone worker;
- Using a buddy system to report or confirm their safety. This could be a family member who can contact the manager in the event of a failure to return as expected;
- Communication systems for sharing information on risk with colleagues in other disciplines and agencies;
- Supervision and auditing of working practices;
- Using personal protective equipment, e.g. mobile phones or personal alarms.

Physical Protection Arrangements

These are most relevant to lone workers actively working on LCC sites. For example reception area layout, building security, call alarms, interview room layout, personal alarms or security lighting in car parks.

Personal Arrangements

This may include training needs, back up and emergency response procedures, use of buddy systems, supervision or joint working for high-risk activities.

Further explanation is provided below:

➤ **Information, instruction and training**

Training should be used to increase staff awareness of risk and the precautions to be taken. This is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. In addition lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced to understand the risks and precautions fully.

Managers should set appropriate boundaries for what can and can't be done while working alone and ensure employees are competent to deal with foreseeable circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their instruction or training. For example:

- When to stop work, or withdraw from a situation and seek advice from a supervisor;
- How to handle violence and aggression, etc.

As a **minimum**, lone workers should be given a copy of the section/team's written lone working procedure (see page 6).

➤ **Supervision**

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, periodic supervision can help to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work. Managers and Supervisors can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. For example, employees new to a job or activity may need to be accompanied at first.

➤ **Out-of-hours lone working**

Special thought needs to be given to lone working that is undertaken out-of-hours. For example, tracking systems based on checking-in at base will not work if there is no-one at the base for the person to check in with.

Recording and Monitoring

Once safe working procedures have been implemented they need to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain effective - for example monitoring staff movements, booking in and out systems, means of identifying a failure to return, means of identifying service users who may present a particular threat / risk, and communication systems for sharing information on risk with colleagues, plus a means of recording incidents.

➤ Tracking lone workers

Systems and procedures to track lone workers may include:

- Supervisor's periodically visiting and observing people working alone;
- Regular contact, or 'checking-in' by phone or radio to their base office or to a buddy;
- Lone workers leaving itineraries of visits, routes to be taken, time of return etc. For example, on an in-and-out board at their base;
- Keeping up to date records of the make, model, colour and registration of the lone workers vehicle;
- Automatic warning devices that operate if specific signals are not periodically received, e.g. systems designed for building security staff;
- Devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency. These may be operated manually or automatically by absence of movement;
- 'Buddy systems' - where a member of a team is nominated as a guaranteed point of contact for another lone worker within the team and vice versa;
- Checks by the manager, or another delegated person, to ensure that a lone worker has returned to their base or home.

Emergency Situations

The most common shortcoming in lone working procedures is the lack of a system to deal with an emergency situation, e.g. a lone worker does not report in at the agreed time, or doesn't turn up at an arranged visit. It is important that systems are in place to respond to foreseeable emergencies and they are tested on a regular basis.

Questions to consider when identifying emergency procedures include:

- Do you attempt to contact the individual first? This may require employees to have a means of communication such as a mobile phone;
- Can you contact the site(s) the individual would be visiting to see if they have been to or left the site? (This action relies on having adequate information on individuals' movements).
- Do you contact a family member to see if the individual has returned home? This may involve keeping details of employees' home numbers/ personal contacts. Make sure data protection permissions are in place.

Employees should be actively encouraged to report and record any incidents that could affect their safety. Ensure that where an incident occurs employees complete an SO2 Incident Report Form. These should be sent to the Corporate Health and Safety Team.

Written Lone Working Procedures

Written lone working procedures which are specific to an individual or group of employees should be developed to supplement lone working risk assessments. The procedure should include general advice on:

- Risk factors that should be considered when carrying out lone working tasks (e.g. personal safety issues);
- Tasks that shouldn't be undertaken by lone workers;
- When to stop work, or withdraw from a situation and seek advice from a supervisor;
- Any alternatives to lone working that are available, e.g. having a meeting at an office instead of visiting someone in their home;
- Communication and checking-in procedures.

The lone working procedure should be communicated and copied to lone workers. The lone workers should be given the opportunity to discuss the procedure and resolve or clarify any relevant issues.

Monitor and Review

Once safe working arrangements have been implemented, they need to be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that they remain effective. Risk assessments should be reviewed every 12 months or sooner if an incident occurs, or if there is a significant change in a lone working activity.

Further Actions And Advice

If you still have concerns about the safety of lone working activities, but are unsure about what more could be done or you are unable to do more, please contact Corporate Health and Safety.