

Department of Human Resources

*Helping Managers to Manage*

# Lone Working

## Health and Safety Guidance for Managers

Issued by Occupational Safety Unit

Originally Issued: July 2002

Last Revised: January 2004



**BRADFORD**  
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## **Manager's Responsibilities**

### **What are your responsibilities as a manager?**

- Assess whether any specific persons would be especially at risk from working alone eg, female staff, young persons etc.
- Consult with your staff who are lone workers to see what they perceive to be the particular risks in their situation and institute control measures
- Check that any workers who are likely to work alone have no medical conditions which would put them at special risk or prohibit them from working alone
- Ensure that any equipment they might operate can be safely managed by one person.
- Encourage lone workers to keep in regular contact with their base or supervisor
- Implement a system of regular check-in calls, and a final call at the end of the task or visit.
- Ensure staff tell colleagues where they are going and how long they will be, leaving a contact number.
- Institute suitable control measures for safe carrying of cash (where necessary)
- Make sure that staff are suitably trained in personal safety, handling aggression etc.
- Provide suitable personal protective equipment eg. personal alarms, mobile phones etc. where appropriate
- Ensure that systems are in place to deal with sudden illness, accident or emergency
- Ensure that all lone workers are aware of alarm signals and are able to evacuate the premises safely

### **What support will you receive from Human Resources Safety Staff?**

HR Safety Staff will: -

- Help you with the interpretation of any aspect of the procedure.
- Provide clarification and further detail on the application of the procedure.
- Monitor the performance of workplaces in relation to the implementation of the procedure and provide appropriate feedback.
- Provide any further information or training that may be relevant following consultation with you

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## **Background**

This Department recognises that lone workers may face particular risks that need to be effectively addressed.

Managers have responsibility for the safety of all staff including lone workers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Staff have the responsibility of taking reasonable care of themselves and anyone else who may be affected by their work.

The following advice is based upon guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

## **Lone Workers**

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

For example:-

- People who work separately from others or from home
- People who work outside normal hours
- Community based staff

## **Safe Working Arrangements**

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of your other staff. Lone workers face particular problems and there are some issues which you need to give special attention when planning safe working arrangements.

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra control measures. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, eg fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents.

You should identify situations where your staff work alone and ask questions such as:-

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
- Can everything involved in the work be safely handled by one person? Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate equipment safely
- Is there a risk of violence? This should be included in your Violence risk assessment
- Would certain staff be especially at risk if they work alone? Eg young, new or pregnant staff

Check that lone workers have no medical conditions that may make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary.

## **Training**

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions fully. You also need to set the limits of what can and cannot be done while working alone.

You need to make sure that your staff are competent to deal with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training, eg when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor or how to handle aggression.

## **Supervision**

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, as a manager you still have a duty to ensure their health and safety at work. Supervision can help to ensure that staff understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are used. 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 to identify and handle health and safety issues. Staff that are new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first.

The level of supervision required is a management decision that should be based on the findings of your risk assessment. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required.

## **Risk Assessment**

You as a manager are legally required to identify the hazards from the work, assess the risks involved, and put measures in place to avoid or control the risks to your staff.

Are there any risks resulting from the fact that staff work alone which have not been adequately covered by existing risk assessments? Consider issues such as the risk of a violent attack to a lone worker.

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and staff given training in them.

Consult with your lone workers to find out what they consider to be the risks of working alone. It is important to talk to your staff as they are a valuable source of information and advice. This will help you to ensure that all relevant hazards have been identified and appropriate controls chosen.

If there are risks that you feel are significant you must document them on an RA1 form. If there are risks that are particularly significant and need further assessment, then complete an RA2 form in line with the existing risk assessment system.

These risk assessments should be shared with the staff they affect, so that they are aware of the risks and the precautions they need to take to do the job safely.

If you do not consider that any risk assessment needs to be undertaken, you need to adequately document how you reached that decision.

All risk assessments must be signed by the manager.

## **Hazards**

(This list is not exhaustive it is meant to serve as an indicator of the more likely hazards)

When working alone:-

- Is there a safe entry and exit from the work area?

- Can any equipment be safely operated by one person?
- Is there a manual handling problem with any of the equipment?
- Can all plant, substances and goods be safely handled by one person?
- Is there chance of violent behaviour?
- Are female employees especially at risk?
- Are new or young workers at risk as a result of their lack of experience?
- Is the employee concerned physically fit enough to carry out the tasks alone?
- Is cash handled, and does it give rise to a hazard?
- Do any of the foreseeable emergencies, eg fire, illness, accident, cause significant risk if the person is on their own?

### **Possible Controls**

(These controls are not an exhaustive list but indicate some common controls for the hazards identified above.)

- Is it appropriate to give manual handling, violence and aggression, or other training?
- Is lifting equipment required?
- Can communications be improved, ie land lines or mobile 'phones'?
- Are audible alarms appropriate?
- Are logging or ringing in procedures required?
- Is supervision or other support required?
- Are clients assessed as any potential risk?
- Do staff have any limits set for 'when to withdraw' or 'not to proceed'?
- Is it appropriate to work with a partner on the task, or nearby?
- Should routes be varied?
- Can cashless techniques be used?
- Is a uniform/identification badge appropriate?
- Staff training, eg personal safety when working alone, handling violence and aggression etc
- Staff informing colleagues where they are going and how long they will be, eg a buddy system
- Local management arrangements for out of hours working
- Staff ringing back at regular intervals
- Staff ringing back in after completion of last visit
- Keeping good information on potentially violent service users and ensuring this is shared with staff
- Staff visiting in twos, with the police, or withdrawing service
- Meeting service users at different venues
- Issuing panic alarms, torches, mobile phones etc

NB These are only examples of possible control measures you could use. You may identify alternative measures that could be taken to effectively reduce the risks.

You should take steps to check that control measures are used and review the risk assessment from time to time to ensure it is still adequate.

If your risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, you should make arrangements to provide help or back-up.

## **Communication**

You need to make sure that all staff who are affected have access to the risk assessments and know what control measures they need to use.

Written evidence should be kept that staff have been made aware, e.g. minutes of staff meeting, circulation list for documents etc.

**LONE WORKER RISK ASSESSMENT**

Department: ..... Service: .....

**PLEASE COMPLETE:**

Name of Assessor: .....

Job Title: .....

Works Tel. No.: .....

(Please use an additional form for each type of job.)

Activity/JobTitle Assessed: .....

Numbers of employees: .....

I have risk assessed these activities, as below.

<b>HAZARDS GIVING RISE TO RISKS</b>	<b>CONTROLS</b>

Signed:..... Date:.....

A copy of the form should be kept on the Risk Assessment File.