

Lone Workers work by themselves without close or direct supervision. They can be in fixed establishments or working away from their fixed base. This can include remote workers with no particular base. If unmanaged lone workers can develop their own unsafe systems of working which may result in accidents and claims. They can be at risk simply because they cannot be directly supervised and do not have access to normal facilities at a fixed base.

MINIMUM STANDARDS

1. No person should be required to work in isolation, so far as is reasonably practicable.
2. Specific tasks and job roles which unavoidably involve or require a person to work alone are subject to a separate documented risk assessment, taking into consideration any particular risk factors. These may be particular to the work environment, the nature of work itself or the individual e.g. Risk of violence/harassment, women and young persons, cash handling, night working, fitness of the individual, and devices and procedures to contact/monitor the lone worker. Any controls deemed necessary are suitably implemented after the appropriate consultation with the workforce.
3. All locations where individuals work alone are covered by a system ensuring that the area is suitable, and well maintained with plant and equipment free from defects.
4. Where necessary there is a proven system in place for checking on the status of the lone worker at established regular intervals.
5. If a person is required to work alone, they are properly trained and of responsible nature.
6. A system is in place for lone workers to summon assistance in emergency situations.
7. Occupational health, absence management, and emergency and first aid arrangements are in place to cover lone worker requirements as per the rest of the workforce.

BEST PRACTISE

- Identify lone working in the organisation and develop a specific policy.
- Bespoke safe working procedures & guidelines are incorporated into health & safety training for lone workers to validate competence and address any particular needs.
- Technological solutions are considered and utilised where appropriate e.g. tagging, lone working management software applications and alarms.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

There are few legal restrictions on lone working but the general duties under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (principles actionable under common law) and Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 will apply. The requirement to carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and implementation of the necessary controls so far as is reasonably practicable will be crucial in determining whether the risk will be acceptable. A court's interpretation as to whether controls employed are 'suitable and sufficient' will arguably be more onerous in lone working situations. Other statutory legislation is applicable to lone working as to all other employees. When considering whether arrangements for lone workers are adequate employers should consult HSE and other guidance.

GUIDANCE & USEFUL INFORMATION

- HSE: Working Alone in Safety – Controlling the Risk of Solitary Work (INDG73 rev. 2002)
- GMB: Guide to working alone (undated)
- LHC: London Hazards Centre Fact sheet – Lone Working (2000)
- UNISON: Working Alone – A Health & Safety Guide on Lone Working for Safety Representatives (2000)

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