



2020-2021

Lone Working Procedure

Ratified by SLT: September 2020
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Who is it for?

For managers and supervisors who have responsibility for employees who work by themselves without direct or close supervision.

What is this Code of Practice about?

This Code of Practice details the steps that Managers and Supervisors should take to manage the risks associated with Lone Working. Employers have the same responsibilities towards staff that work alone as they have to all other workers. Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (HSWA) employers must ensure the health and safety of employees (and others) so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes providing a safe system of work, safe work place and safe access.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSW) places explicit requirements on employers to carry out a risk assessment of the work activities undertaken by lone workers and reduce any significant risks identified by means of appropriate control measures. It is much better to take a proactive approach to this rather than wait for things to go wrong as emphasised in our Health and Safety Policy.

Who are Lone Workers?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, and are found in a variety of situations. They may be workers in a fixed establishment, where only one person is working on the premises e.g. in schools (caretakers, cleaners, etc.), and also home workers. There is a separate Home Working Code of Practice. Lone working also includes employees working away from their fixed base (peripatetic workers) e.g. social workers, pest control workers and street wardens. Do not forget to include agency workers and other temporary staff.

So what do I have to do?

There is no specific regulation for Lone Working. However, the broad duties of the HSWA and MHSW Regulations still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting in place measures to eliminate or control the risks. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommends that the risk assessment follow the five-step approach to risk assessment. Further guidance on risk assessment can be found in the HSCOP 01-00. Managers are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are carried out. Appropriate training and support to carry out risk assessments is available through the health and safety training program. There are some very high-risk activities such as working in confined spaces or electrical work near live conductors and fumigation where there is a prohibition on working alone. In these instances, or if you are unsure, advice must be sought from Health and Safety Services before any work is commenced. Medical conditions of staff should also be considered as part of the Risk Assessment . ed diabetes

What questions should I consider as part of the risk assessment?

Lone workers should not be at more risk than other types of workers and this may require additional control measures. Assessors must consider whether the work could be done safely alone. The assessment must take account of:

- The hazards and the risk of the work
- Any additional or special risks because employees are working alone
- Any previous incidents arising out of the activities
- Foreseeable emergencies e.g. fire, ill health or accident.

Questions that should be asked include:

- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Does the workplace present a special risk to lone workers e.g. is there a safe way in and out (or to and from) the workplace?
- Are workers medically fit and suitable for alone working?
- What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?
- How will the lone worker be supervised?
- What are the emergency arrangements?

Where the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back up must be put into place.

What sort of controls could be put into place to reduce the risks to lone workers?

- Training and information – health and safety training is critical for lone workers. Workers need to know about the risks of their work and about precautions such as what to do in the event of an emergency, how to seek help and advice when needed, how to use communication equipment provided, etc.
- Supervision and communication – The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle lone working situations.

What else do I need to consider?

Other issues to consider include:

- Access to adequate first aid facilities should be arranged.
- Violence and aggression – Lone workers can be particularly vulnerable to violence.
- Home visits or working in remote locations – Working in these situations may present additional risks and procedures will need to be in place to manage the risks in these situations.
- Arrangements need to be made to ensure that staff has access to facilities for rest breaks.

How do I tie the risk assessment and the controls together?

Staff members need to be consulted through the risk assessment process and the selection of appropriate controls. It is very important to develop effective local procedures (i.e. safe systems of work) that all management and staff in the workplace understand. For example, if having identified that a mobile phone is required as a control there needs to be agreed systems in place so that both staff and their supervisors know how, why and when controls are used. This would include things like who to phone if the lone working staff member needed help, the appropriate frequency of contact between staff and supervisors, what happens if lone workers haven't contacted their supervisor at an agreed time, etc.

What about Home working?

There is a separate Code of Practice under development that will give advice and guidance on the specific health and safety issues involved in home working.

Where can I get further advice about Lone Working?

Contact Health and Safety Service on 020 8424 1521

Further Information:

HMSO (2003). The Working Time (Amended) Regulations 2003, Statutory Instrument 2003 No. 1684, Crown Copyright

HSE (1999). The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, Approved Code of Practice and Guidance – L21, HSE Books, 2nd Ed.

HSE (2005)b. Working Alone in Safety – Controlling the risks of solitary work, INDG73(rev), HSE Books