

LONE WORKING

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. There is no general legal prohibition on working alone, but employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their employees, including lone workers.

Who are lone workers and what jobs do they do?

A lone worker is someone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision. This includes:

People in fixed establishments where:

- Only one person works on the premises, i.e. petrol stations, kiosks, shops and home workers.
- People work separately from others, i.e. in factories, warehouse or leisure centres.
- People work outside normal hours i.e. cleaners, security, maintenance or repair staff.

Mobile workers working away from their fixed base, including:

- Those who conduct electrical repairs, lift repairs or vehicle recovery.
- Service workers, i.e. rent collectors, social workers, home helps, district nurses.

Occasional off-site lone workers:

There will be times when your employees will go to another business and will be lone working. It is important in that situation to alert the 'host' employer and inform them of any risks associated with the work and controls measures that are required.

Your responsibilities as an employer

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone under both the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees and any other persons affected by their operations i.e. contractors and self-employed people. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone.

The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations require employers to consider any Health & Safety risks before people are allowed to work alone and to ensure that lone workers are not placed at a higher risk than

other workers.

What are the hazards?

As lone workers can sometimes work in remote locations, relatively minor conditions could deteriorate rapidly if they remain undetected for a length of time. For example, this could include suffering an accident, falling ill or in extreme cases, being attacked.

What do you need to consider before arranging lone working?

Here's a list of factors that you should consider when arranging lone working:-

- The amount of people required to complete a task, e.g. manual handling loads.
- If the workplace itself represents a special risk to the lone worker, e.g. hazardous substance or dangerous machinery.
- The implementation of clear communication channels for employees, especially for those whose first language is not English.
- The inclusion of lone workers in your Employer's Liability Act cover (Compulsory Insurance).

What do you need to do?

As for any other part of your operation you need to conduct a risk assessment.



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8 key questions to ask in a lone working risk assessment

The assessment should identify tasks that cannot be safely done by one person alone and situations where a lone person would be at more risk than two people working together. It should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire and plant failure; identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

1. Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
2. Does the work involve lifting objects too large for one person?
3. Is there a risk of violence?
4. What level of supervision/monitoring is present/needed?
5. Can access equipment that is needed, such as ladders/trestles, be safely handled by one person?
6. Is more than one person needed to operate essential safety controls?
7. Are women, new and expectant mothers, young workers, or people with medical issues especially at risk if they work alone?

It is advisable to seek medical advice on whether the job or a potential emergency situation could create additional physical or mental health issues for any employees.

8. Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?

4 ways of managing risk with lone workers

1. **Training:** Where there is limited supervision, training needs to be provided to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty.
 - Lone workers must be sufficiently experienced and understand the risks and precautions fully.
 - Set clear limits to what can and cannot be done while

working alone.

- Ensure employees are competent to deal with circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training i.e. when to stop work and seek advice.

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.

2. **Keeping in touch:** Procedures need to be put in place and may include:

- Supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone, including CCTV.
- Automatic devices which operate if signals are not received from the lone worker.
- Regular contact between the worker and supervisor using a mobile, telephone or radio.
- Other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency.

3. **Emergencies:** Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them.

4. **First Aid:** Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries.

Important Notice: Your Health & Safety Information Sheet is for guidance only. It does not replace our written Health & Safety policies and procedures and you must make sure you are fully aware of these.

Training Courses: For more details on our Health & Safety Training courses available, please contact our learning Zone department via email: learningzone@shrec.org.uk or visit our website: www.shrec.org.uk