



CTT

LONE WORKING POLICY

2021/2022

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Introduction

It is inevitable that at certain times, staff and others will find themselves working alone. These situations can occur, for example, at the beginning and end of flexible working periods, during holidays, at night and at weekends.

Many staff work alone at some time during their working periods and in the majority of cases, they do so without significant risk. For example, persons working alone in offices carrying out typical office activities outside normal working hours are unlikely to be at significant risk provided the appropriate fire precautions are in place. However, there are occasions when it is not possible to devise arrangements for work to be done safely by one person. In these cases, alternative arrangements involving help or back-up have to be put in place.

The following types of staff may find themselves working alone at some time:

- SCITT Lead
- Tutors
- Senior Administrator
- Cleaner
- Trainee

If you are working in alone in the centre you must ensure that you have a mobile phone with you at all times in case of an emergency.

It is essential therefore that the potential hazards and risks associated with lone working are taken into account when risk assessments are carried out.

Hazards, which lone workers may face, include:

- Accidents/emergencies arising from work and the lack of first aid equipment
- Fire
- Unsafe access or exit
- Equipment failure
- Inadequate rest, hygiene and welfare facilities

What is a 'Lone Worker'?

For the purposes of this Safety Advice Note, a lone worker is someone who has no visual or audible communication with another person who is capable of providing assistance without delay, should illness or injury occur.

The Law

There is no overall legal prohibition on working alone. But the general duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the specific duties of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, still apply. These require the identification of the hazards of work, assessment of any significant risks involved, and devising and implementing safe working arrangements to ensure that the risks are either eliminated or adequately controlled, i.e. if the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be in place.

Employers are also under a duty to provide:

- Facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981
- Welfare under the Workplace (Health Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992
- Suitable equipment and training in their use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER)

There are, however some situations where lone working is prohibited by law. These are as follows:

- **Entry into confined spaces** where there may be a risk of inadequate ventilation (e.g. tanks, manholes, pipes, ducts and flues, enclosed basement rooms)
- **Use of ladders where the ladder cannot be secured/lashed and requires 'footing' by another person. (SAN(G)19 – Working at Heights gives further information)**
- **Use of specified dangerous machinery** where there is a risk of entanglement, entrapment, crushing, impact, or injury from cutting or shearing, stabbing or puncture, unless the worker has received sufficient training in work at those machines.
 - Woodworking machines
 - Dough mixers
 - Meat mincing machines
 - Metal milling machines
 - Slicing machines used in catering (both powered and manual)
 - Potato chipping machines
 - Food mixing machines when used with attachments for mincing, slicing, chipping or any other cutting operations or for crumbling

'Sufficient Training' in the context of the above machines must include an appropriate period of 1:1 instruction on the hazards associated with them, and the measures required to minimise the risks. The correct use of guards, safety devices and protective clothing where appropriate must be demonstrated. A written record of training must be kept.

- **Work on or near live electrical conductors**

The Electricity at Work Regulations 1989 gives as examples the following electrical work where it is likely that the person carrying out the work should be accompanied:

- Electrical work involving manipulation of live, uninsulated power conductors at say, 240 volts using insulated tools;
- Other work on or near bare live conductors where a person working on his/her own would not be capable of undertaking the work safely without assistance in, for example, keeping other persons from the work area.

Safe Working Arrangements for Lone Workers

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff or students. The obvious question that has to be asked is whether the risks of the work can be adequately controlled by one person, or are more people necessary?

Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than others who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. All situations where staff and students may be working alone should be identified and any additional risks, for example in the office, laboratory/science prep room, and boiler house or at a remote location on the site, the following questions should be considered:

- **Will situations that are legally prohibited arise (see above)? Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?**

For example, it is not generally reasonable for staff or students to work alone in workshops because there is usually dangerous machinery about. (Fatal accidents have occurred following entanglement on centre lathes which may have been prevented had there been another person available to switch the machine off and help the trapped person). However, if just low-risk work such as assembly or some cleaning were being planned, then provided other risks were minimised and a system of checking or line of communication established, then it would be reasonable for a person to work alone.

- **Is the person medically fit to work alone?**

Check that lone workers have no medical conditions, which make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary. Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

- **Is the person competent and experienced enough to work alone?**

Consider whether the person is sufficiently competent and experienced to work alone. Employees that are young, new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be supervised or accompanied at first.

- **Is there safe access and exit from the premises for that person?**

In the evenings and at weekends, many doors, which provide an exit from buildings during normal working hours, are locked for security reasons. **All** means of escape required during normal working hours **must** be available wherever a person works in the building outside normal working hours. However, the mechanism for opening doors on exit routes may be different outside normal working hours. Has the lone worker been made aware that aspects of his/her route out of the building in an emergency may be different?

Staff involved in home visits and home tuition should ensure that they are aware of their nearest exit from the premises should an emergency situation arise.

- **Can one person safely handle all the plant, and goods involved in the work?**

Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for safe running of equipment.

- **Can one person safely handle all the substances and materials involved in the work safely?**

Hazardous substances e.g. substances which are subject to the COSHH Regulations, flammable, and radioactive materials, must be considered carefully. These are substances that have, for example, the potential to cause severe acute injury, either alone or as a component of a reaction, to cause burns, or to affect the respiratory, cardiovascular, or central nervous system. The term 'handling' in this context refers to a manipulative procedure or the supervision of a chemical reaction that has not reached a stable state. It would not normally include moving a closed container from one point to another, nor being in the same room as a chemical reaction which was safe and stable.

- **Is the person familiar with fire procedures, first aid and security arrangements and relevant codes of practice?**

Lone workers should know how to get out of the building in the event of a fire or other emergency. They should also know where the nearest first aid box is located and be familiar with the locking up/security procedures for the building.

Lone workers should be familiar with the relevant code of practice or procedure for the activity they are involved in, e.g. Health and Safety Codes of Practice for Design & Technology and Secondary Science (technicians) and School Caretaking (for caretakers and site managers).

- **Are women especially at risk if they work alone?**
- **Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?**
- **Does the lone worker have access to a telephone or radio communication?**
- **Will cash be handled and is there a risk of violence?**
- **Are persons at risk when leaving the premises?**

Training

Risk assessments will help to determine the level of training needed for each type of work.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced. Establishments should, therefore, establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone, and, where appropriate, when to stop the work and seek advice.

Supervision

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on the School to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision complements information, instruction and training and helps to ensure that staff and others understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work to identify and handle safety issues.

Whether or not to supervise an individual is a management decision; it should not be left to individuals to decide when and where they require assistance.

Illness, accidents and emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established in schools and other educational departments/units and the appropriate persons given clear and concise training and instructions on how to implement them. All lone workers should have access to the accident and defect reporting books and procedures and should report any accidents and near misses to their line manager as soon as practically possible.

Monitoring

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period (this may be via a reporting in system to colleagues, family or friends). In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

- Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers;
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone workers and a member of supervisory staff or another colleague is maintained using either a telephone or radio.
- Automatic warning devices, which raise the alarm in an emergency and are activated by the absence of activity from the lone worker.
- Checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.
- The use of a nominated safety partner or “buddy” system (see below).

Use of a nominated safety partner or “buddy” system

This is a fairly basic system to minimise the likelihood of an employee being left unaided should something untoward happen to them.

Prior to anyone undertaking lone working, the following information should be made available to the nominated safety partner or buddy:

- Contact details e.g. mobile phone number
- Agreed contact times or intervals and planned codes, if appropriate.

- Full details of itinerary and appointment details, if appropriate. This should include times of appointments as well as the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all persons to be visited.
- Expected time of return, allowing for reasonably foreseeable delays such as traffic congestion, and the fact that meetings, more often than not, overrun rather than finish early.
- Information on the route to be taken when travelling
- Colour, make and registration number of the vehicle being used
- Details of emergency personal contacts

The lone worker should make contact with their safety partner at the agreed time or at agreed intervals to reassure them that they are OK. It is important that this includes arrangements for if the last “report in” is to be after normal office hours. Should the lone worker be delayed at any stage they should ensure that they contact their safety partner and revise their itinerary and expected return time.

Should the lone worker fail to make contact the safety partner will try to contact the lone worker using the itinerary and other details provided by the lone worker. If contact can still not be made after a reasonable agreed length of time and the lone worker still has not reported in, then the Police should be contacted for advice.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment should identify all hazards, the risks associated and the control measures to be used when lone working is required.

Those tasks, which are deemed unacceptable to be performed by a lone worker under any circumstances, must be documented in the written record of risk assessment kept by the school/department.

Any risk assessment and its resulting control measures **must** be discussed with the individuals concerned.

As with all risk assessments, the findings should be reviewed at reasonable intervals and in the light of experience. This requirement should be part of the school procedures generally.

Appendix A gives a sample risk assessment format for Lone Working. This can be amended or added to as other situations and hazards are identified.

For further information and advice on this or any other health and safety issue, please contact the Health and Safety Team, Client Services and Property Unit, 18 Portland Square, Carlisle CA1 1PE. Telephone 01228 606026/25.

References

HSE Booklet INDG73(rev) – Working Alone in Safety – Controlling the risks of solitary work

Cumbria County Council Safety Procedures No. 24 - Unison Guide – Working Alone