

Lone worker Policy

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This policy statement supplements the Health and Safety Policy and is designed to promote safe lone working. The company has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of its employees while they are at work. At any given time there may be employees who are working alone, whether as a substantial part of their working life or on an occasional basis. The company has a responsibility to assess the risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary; and the employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe and proper precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone.

2 PURPOSES

2.1 The aim of this policy is to outline the companies responsibilities towards staff working alone by:

- Defining what “lone working” is
- Taking action to reduce risk to lone workers
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of their responsibility to use any systems introduced to assist lone workers.

3 SCOPE

3.1 This policy applies to all employees including temporary workers and those employed on a casual basis.

4 DEFINITION

4.1 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as those “who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. They may include:

- People working separately from others in a building
- People who work outside “normal” hours
- People who work away from their fixed base without colleagues, e.g. visiting students off site.

4.2 The definition can cover employees in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures. This policy will refer to high risk and low risk activities.

4.3 Some employees may spend most of their working lives working with others, but find themselves working alone occasionally, for example, when working late. Others will work alone on a daily basis. This policy will refer to frequent lone workers and occasional lone workers.

5 POTENTIAL HAZARDS OF LONE WORKING

5.1 People who work alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks. However, additionally they may encounter the following:

Accidents or sudden illnesses may happen when there is no-one to summon help or first aid.

- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Fire.

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- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone, e.g. heavy lifting, or use of certain equipment.
 - Lack of safe way in or out of a building (e.g. danger of being accidentally locked in). Steps can be taken to reduce the risks of all these events.
- 5.2 The perception of these hazards or the actual risks may be different for different people. For example the inexperienced or young workers may underestimate the risks of an activity; some workers may feel particularly vulnerable to violence away from the workplace or after dark; or a medical condition may make it unsafe for an individual to work alone.
- 5.3 These factors must be considered when doing risk assessments. If there are lone workers within an area the manager must undertake risk assessments and take appropriate steps to reduce the risk, particularly for frequent lone workers or lone workers engaged in high-risk activities. They should consider:
- Does the workplace present any special risk to a lone worker?
 - Can all the equipment, substances and goods used on the premises be safely handled by one person? Is any manual handling involved safe for a single person?
 - Is there a risk of violence or the threat of violence? Is the nature of a visit or the person being visited likely to increase the risk? Will the employee be alone in a dark or remote location?

6 MEASURES TO REDUCE THE RISK OF LONE WORKING

6.1 SUPERVISION

Lone workers are by definition not under constant supervision. However, managers must ensure that the employees understand the risks associated with their work and the relevant safety precautions. They must put into place arrangements for the individual to contact a supervisor if they need additional guidance. Regular contact by phone or radio may be appropriate. The Manager should assess what level of supervision is required.

6.2 REPORTING BACK

6.2.1 For high risk or frequent lone workers a reporting back system must be implemented so that if the employee has not reported in by the expected time action is taken to contact them. All employees involved share a responsibility to maintain such informal systems for safe lone working.

6.2.3 Staff who meet with customers or clients on a one to one basis on council premises should also be considered. Whilst they are not alone in the building, they may be alone with the client in a place where other colleagues cannot see them. Employees are responsible for letting colleagues know they will be alone, and should arrange to be checked at planned intervals or at the end of the meeting time (Buddy system).

6.3 ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. This should include being made aware of special arrangements for out of hours incidents, making sure they are aware of the location of the nearest First Aid kit, and they should ensure they sign in and out of the building in the relevant book.

6.4 TASKS NOT SUITABLE FOR LONE WORKING

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Risk assessment will identify the hazards of work. When 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 should be put in place, or the work reassigned to another worker or done in hours when the worker is not alone. For example, a worker who arrives before other colleagues may be instructed not to attempt heavy manual lifting until other colleague arrives to assist.

6.5 VIOLENCE AT WORK

6.5.1 Employees must ensure that violent incidents are reported to ensure that the risk can be communicated to other employees and relevant action taken.

6.5.2 The risk of violence may not be directly related to a particular property. It may be associated with environmental issues like working alone outside after dark, or a situation may arise where there was no previous history of incidents. Employees likely to be lone workers in such situations must be trained in dealing with difficult people, in ways to recognise a risk and in behaviours which may reduce the risk.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Establishing safe working for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other employees, but the risk assessment must take account of any extra risk factors. Managers must ensure that they have not only introduced measures to reduce any risk but must also ensure that they have communicated their expectations to lone workers and trained them appropriately. All employees, including lone workers, are responsible for following safe systems of work and all employees can take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with their normal working life.

Review date: 01.09.2018

Otis Hanley