
A guide to Health and Safety for Lone Workers



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1. Introduction

Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of all of their employees whilst at work. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to people who work alone. It is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to eliminate, mitigate or control risk, where necessary.

This guide has been created to assist employers when dealing with lone workers.

The acceptance of this guide by the employer does not in any way absolve the employer from that responsibility, nor is it intended to confirm or suggest that the employer fully meets the statutory requirements.

The BSIA has endeavoured to ensure that the content of this guide is accurate and reflects good practice. The BSIA does not accept liability for errors or omissions.

This document is a guide only and reference should be made to Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1974/37/pdfs/ukpga_19740037_en.pdf

2. Who are lone workers?

A lone worker is defined as an employee who carries out an activity that is intended to be carried out in isolation from other workers, without close or direct supervision. The work activity should normally last for some time, lone workers can be found in a wide range of situations. Some examples are listed below:

- Security officer
- Engineer
- Employees who work outside normal hours
- Mobile workers working away from their fixed base.

3. Legal responsibilities

3.1. Employer's liability

There are certain activities where there are specific legal duties e.g. erection of scaffolding and use of unsupported access equipment.

Employers do have a general duty under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act to provide a safe place of work, a safe system of work, competent fellow employees and a common law duty to ensure they take reasonable care for the safety and health of their employees. The employer also has an additional obligation to provide safe plant, machinery and equipment. Under Regulation 3 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations employers are required to carry out a risk assessment of the hazards to which employees are exposed and implement appropriate preventive and protective control measures.

3.2. Occupier's liability

Occupiers of premises have a general responsibility for the safety and health of anyone on that premises. This responsibility exists if they employ or engage with lone workers or not.

4. Risk assessment

The key to maximising safety wherever lone working is under consideration is the performance of a satisfactory risk assessment that should address two main features:

- Whether a person working alone can do the task safely and
- What arrangements or controls are required to be implemented to ensure that the lone worker is at no more risk than employees working together.

The risk assessment should prescribe arrangements for monitoring the hazards of lone working by qualified supervisors/managers.

The employer should maintain appropriate communications with the lone worker and the lone worker should be equipped with a means of two-way communication. The system should enable the worker to raise an alarm or be located if assistance is required.

5. Condition of the workplace

Appropriate considerations to the conditions should include, but are not limited to:

- Is there is a safe means of access and egress to the workplace?
- Is there adequate illumination, heating and ventilation for the job or task to be carried out?
- Can all equipment, especially powered tools and access equipment such as ladders, be used safely by the lone worker?
- Can the lone worker perform lifting operations safely?
- Are emergency precautions (e.g. fire escape) sufficient for the job or task?
- Is there any risk of violence to the lone worker?
- Is the individual medically suitable to work alone?

6. Training and supervision

Training and experience is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid panic in unusual situations. The following should be considered in relation to lone workers:

- Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced to fully understand the hazards and risks that they may encounter and any precautions or controls required.
- Employers should set limits of what may and may not be done whilst working alone.
- Lone workers should be competent to deal with unusual or new circumstances beyond their training, and know when to stop and seek advice.
- The extent of supervision depends on the risk and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues. Employees new to a job may need to be accompanied until the necessary competencies are achieved.
- There should be regular (as determined by the risk assessment) contact by radio or mobile phone with the lone worker.
- Automatic warnings should be activated if specific signals are not received at base.
- Other warnings designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency should be devised. For example: check that the lone worker has returned to base or home on completion of the work.

7. What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly and appropriately to emergencies. The risk assessment should have identified foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and lone workers trained in them. Occupiers of premises should provide information about emergency procedures and danger areas to visiting lone workers whilst on their premises. Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

8. Where can I find out more?

The following resources may be of further help:

- Working alone - Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working, Health and Safety Executive, INDG73, download from:
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf
- Safe work in confined spaces: Confined Spaces Regulations (1997) Approved Code of Practice. HSE Books L101 (third edition 2014) ISBN: 978 0 7176 6622 5. Download from:
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This document was created by the Lone Worker Section of the British Security Industry Association (BSIA).

The British Security Industry Association is the trade association for the private security industry in the UK. Our members provide over 70% of UK security products and services and are certified to ISO 9001 quality standards and BS 8484 Code of practice for the provision of lone worker device (LWD) services, both of which have been verified by independent UKAS accredited inspectorates.

The BSIA's Lone Worker Section has been established for companies that provide electronic lone worker solutions to assist organisations to meet their legal obligations where working alone is a specific risk of the job(s) or tasks undertaken, e.g. security officers, engineers, people who work outside of normal hours or mobile workers working away from their fixed base.

As a BSIA member, your company profile will be raised and you will be at the heart of influencing the future of the lone worker industry. You will become part of a unique group of high quality and professional companies which are well-respected and well-represented to government, end users, specifiers, standards and legislative bodies. For more information contact the BSIA.

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