



worcestershire  
countycouncil



*Guidance*

*for*

**All**

**human resources**

# **Lone Working**

Human Resources

(01905) 766219

September 2004

## **LONE WORKING AND PERSONAL SAFETY – GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES**

- 1. INTRODUCTION**
- 2. RESPONSIBILITIES**
- 3. RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES / FACTORS**
  - 3.1 Management Scheme**
  - 3.2 Risk Factors**
  - 3.3 Control and Mitigating Measures**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The HSE defines lone workers as:

Persons who work alone without close or direct supervision for example -

People in fixed establishments where:

- only one person works on the premises,
- people work separately from others,
- people work outside normal hours, eg cleaners, security, special production, maintenance or repair staff etc.

Mobile workers working away from their fixed base:

- construction, installation, maintenance, repairs, decorating, vehicle recovery etc.
- agricultural and forestry workers
- service workers, e.g. social workers, home help and others visiting domestic and commercial premises.

The Council has extended this definition to include single person working, in any situation, where the ability to summon assistance may be impaired.

The guidance given below is to enable managers to determine when lone working is acceptable and what precautions can be taken to reduce the risk to employees.

Overall, the Council's view is that lone workers should not be at more risk than any other employees, but there are additional hazards with respect to personal safety / security that are beyond the Council's control. The most obvious hazard is violence whether or not it results in a physical attack.

## 2. RESPONSIBILITIES

Lone working is not covered by any specific legislation but the general duties on employers set out in the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, cover work of any description. The Council recognises that lone working is a situation where employees may be put at risk either through the work being performed, through their own fault or by an external agency: the Council extends the same duty of care to lone workers as to other employees.

Lone working should carry no more risk than normal working but managers must recognise that the risks to lone workers are greater because there is a reduced level of immediate support available. By following normal risk assessment methods, managers should be able to eliminate, or reduce to an acceptable level, the risks associated with lone working.

Managers should,

- Identify where lone working occurs
- Eliminate lone working if possible
- Assess the risks where lone working is unavoidable
- Reduce risks to an acceptable level by implementing control measures
- Train staff in methods of safe lone working and providing information and instruction
- Record the risk assessment
- Monitor the situation to ensure the risk reduction methods are working.

Managers must also be aware of any special circumstances that require additional steps to be taken.

Examples are,

- Where violence is foreseeable
- If first aid cover will be required or can be self administered
- If cover by emergency services has been suspended or withdrawn.

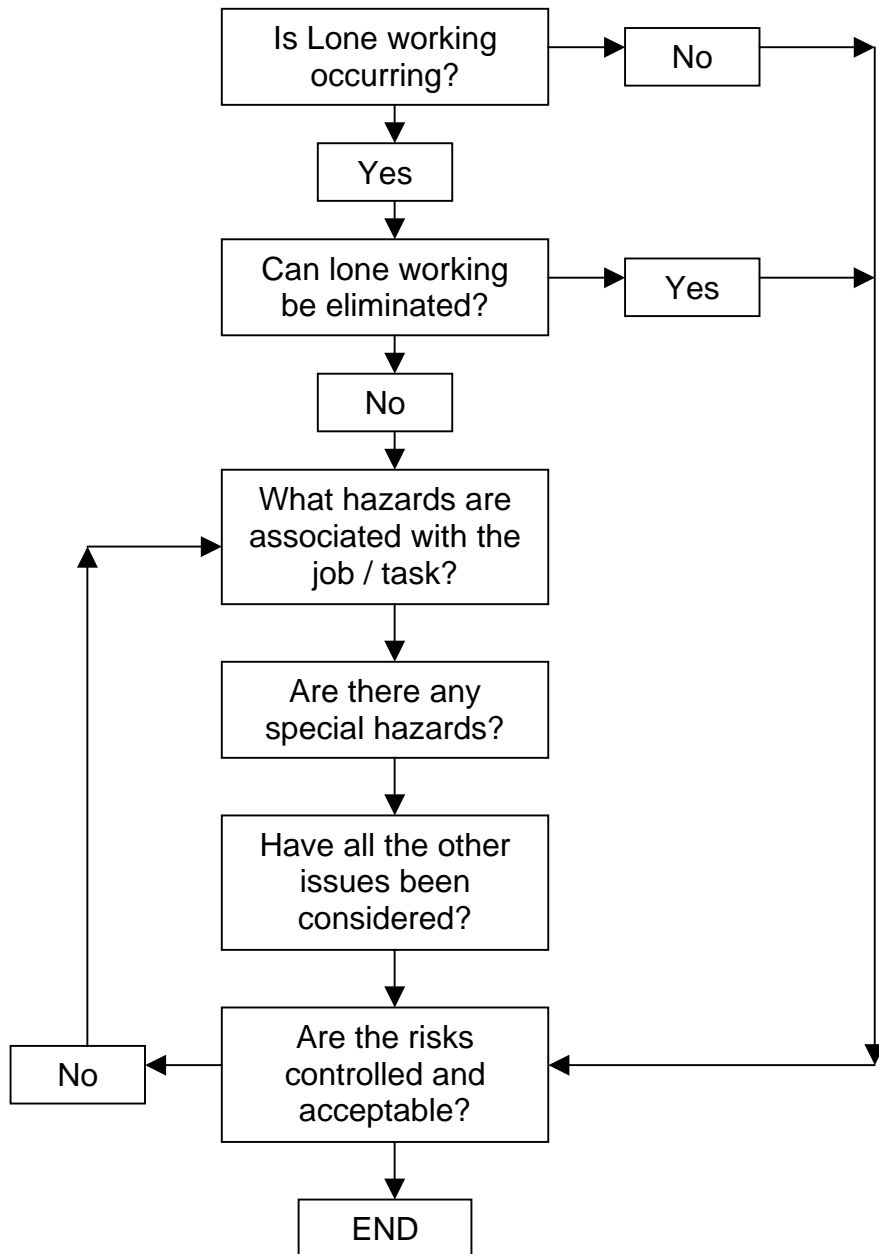
It is also important for managers to consider other issues such as shift work, mobile workers, location, weather conditions and welfare provision. Many instances of lone working will occur with mobile workers at remote locations. In these circumstances the absence of welfare facilities (food, drink and toilet facilities) and adverse weather conditions may have a significant influence.

Employees should recognise that they also have personal responsibilities with respect to lone working –

- To work as they have been trained
- Not to attempt work outside of their competence
- Inform their manager if the system of work is inadequate or puts them at risk
- To check that the systems in place to ensure their safety whilst lone working are functioning correctly.

### 3. RISK ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES / FACTORS

#### 3.1 Management Scheme



### 3.2 Risk Factors

The following factors should be considered when risk assessing a lone working situation. **In addition to these ‘special’ risks associated with lone working, it is also necessary to ensure that general risk assessments of the workplace, and those required by specific legislation, are performed.**

- Is the person medically fit and competent to work alone?
- Does the person have any other problems that could affect lone working?
- Does the job require the use of machinery?
- Does the job involve the use of biological agents or chemicals?
- Does the job require heavy lifting (with or without mechanical aids)?
- Have all the usual workplace hazards been considered?
- When does the lone working take place (day, night, weekends, on callout etc.)?
- Where does the lone working take place (indoors, outdoors, remote locations etc.)?
- Does the person perceive any other hazards or risks associated with the lone working?
- Has training been offered and given?
- Does the person understand the risks associated with lone working?
- Has provision been made for regular contact and supervision (including backup systems)?
- Is there a system in place for injury or illness?
- Have plans, procedures and risk assessments been prepared?
- Are systems in place for dealing with emergencies (Police, Fire, etc.)?
- Is the workplace secure?

In addition the following should be considered for personal safety / security.

- Is there a risk of abuse or violence?
- Does the lone worker have to deal with members of the public in their own homes?
- Is any vehicle, owned by the lone worker or provided by the Council, in good condition, properly maintained and serviced?
- Does the lone worker have to walk through unlit streets, after dark, or enter ‘unsafe’ areas?
- Does the lone worker have to use public transport or taxis?
- Is the lone worker aware of the risks to personal safety / security?
- Has a mobile phone, personal alarm or similar device been made available or provided?
- Has the lone worker been trained to understand body language and defuse potentially aggressive situations.
- Has the lone worker had self-defence training?

The above list of factors is not exhaustive but will cover most situations of lone working and personal safety.

Examples of lone working risk assessments are given in the appendix.

### 3.3 Control and Mitigating Measures

The controls and mitigating measures can mostly be determined by answering the risk factor questions above.

#### Personal Safety / Security

When dealing with personal safety / security, managers should be aware that the lone worker should primarily specify what controls are required. The objective should be to provide the individual with sufficient measures to reduce the risks to an acceptable level and minimise anxiety. However, some people may not perceive personal safety / security as keenly as others and in these cases managers must decide on the risk reduction measures and ensure they are adopted / used.

The most important controls are those covering emergencies. There must be,

- Suitable and sufficient alarm and communication systems
- Systems in place to track where lone workers might be. This could be a simple list of addresses / appointments or a sophisticated GPS device for lone workers in remote locations.
- Procedures to provide help and assistance and possibly search and rescue. In some cases these procedures will include the emergency services – police, fire and ambulance.

#### Buddy Systems

In circumstances where there is a potential for violence or for other extreme situations to arise, a buddy system may be a required risk reduction measure.

- Managers and / or employees should identify areas of lone working where a buddy system is necessary.
- The lone worker / manager should agree who is to be the 'buddy'.
- The 'buddy' must be advised of the nature of the lone working including -

Time and duration of work (including any travel time)

Expected time of departure and expected return time to office

Nature of activity and if there is more than one activity

Venue

Route taken

Lone worker's mobile telephone number

- Before departing the 'lone worker' must advise the buddy that they are leaving  
After each activity – worker to telephone 'buddy' that they have completed task.
- The lone worker must leave the mobile switched on whilst travelling (please referred to Council guidance on the use of Hand Held Mobile Phones). If the mobile rings, the officer must pull over to the side of the road and stop before answering the call.

### **Buddy action if no call received.**

- Telephone officer's mobile
- If no reply (possibly because officer driving through no signal area) buddy to call again after 15 mins.
- If no reply after 15 mins, wait 20 mins and then call the emergency services.

### Other controls

Other controls should focus on the following areas –

- Work environment – can the risks be reduced by managing the work more effectively?
  - Holding meetings in Council offices rather than visiting clients at home.
  - Arranging furniture etc. so that the lone worker has a clear exit.
  - Ensuring nothing in the meeting room can be used as a weapon.
  - Working as a pair where there is a known threat of violence.
- People
  - How many people are involved?
  - What is the age profile of the people involved/
  - Do the people involved appear on any register as being potentially violent?
- Staff
  - Are lone worker's properly training for the situations they may encounter?  
This could be simple assertiveness / confidence training, methods for diffusing situations, breakaway techniques or even self-defence.
  - Is everyone comfortable and happy with the risk reduction methods?
  - Is the lone worker at risk because of gender or race?

The controls given above are not exhaustive because many lone working situations are unique. Managers and lone workers should therefore discuss and risk assess each lone working situation.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:**  
**Issued: September 2004 (Clive Werrett)**

## Appendix

### Example Risk Assessments

Lone Working Situation	Hazard	Severity	Likelihood	Risk	Control
Home visits	Violence, Restricted access/egress	M	L	L	Carry mobile phone at all times (switched on) Carry personal alarm on person at all times Implement buddy system Consider attending with another officer
		L	VL	VL	
Office – late working	Violence, Sudden illness, Accidents	L	L	VL	Carry mobile phone at all times (switched on) Implement buddy system Use of fixed alarm in building
		M	VL	L	
		M	L	VL	
Travelling to venue	Violence, Hypothermia, Sudden illness, Bad weather	VL	VL	VL	Carry mobile phone at all times (switched on) Carry personal alarm on person at all times Implement buddy system
		L	VL	VL	
		L	VL	VL	
		L	L	VL	
Outside work	Bad weather, Hypothermia, Sudden illness, Violence	L	L	L	Carry mobile phone (GPS enabled) at all times (switched on) Carry personal alarm on person at all times Implement buddy system
		L	VL	VL	
		L	VL	VL	
		L	VL	VL	
		VL	VL	VL	
Reception	Violence	VL	VL	VL	Use deep counter Seat staff higher Fit alarm system Cover area by CCDTV Make area friendly and open Train staff

Key: H – High, M – Medium, L – Low, (V-Very)