

Health & Safety

Working Safely Guides

Lone Working

LONE WORKING

1. DEFINITION

It is the nature of many jobs that staff will work alone. Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision and may include: people working outside normal office hours; the first or last person on the premises; receptionists; drivers; people working from home; people working totally alone in a building; people working separately in large premises; people involved in securing a building; and those making home or site visits. There may be times when staff are involved in more than one category of risk.

There is no general prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 still apply. Managers should identify whether the activity can be safely undertaken while working alone. New staff and students will require additional support and some people may have a medical condition, which may make it unsuitable for them to work alone.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANAGERS

It is the County Council's policy, through managers, to undertake risk assessments, which involves identifying hazards, assessing the risks and implementing adequate control measures to eliminate or reduce the risks to the lowest practicable level.

Although working alone may not introduce any new hazards, the level of risk could increase significantly when a task is carried out unaccompanied. This may require additional risk-control measures to be implemented to ensure that staff are not exposed to greater risks than those who work together. Managers must ensure that staff who are considered lone workers and all relevant support staff are aware of the arrangements in place to manage the risk. These arrangements must be in writing.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES

- Take reasonable care of yourself and others
- Co-operate with managers in identifying foreseeable risks and following procedures and practices whether written or verbal, designed to protect your safety
- Familiarise yourself with policies and risk assessments
- If you encounter any new hazards during the course of your work that have not been considered previously or circumstances have changed, speak with your manager or supervisor
- Never knowingly compromise your safety and if you feel uneasy, report any concerns to your manager
- Participate in any training designed to improve your safety at work
- Share information with colleagues and record if necessary
- Report any accidents and incidents of verbal and physical abuse including near misses, whether injury is sustained or not, to your manager or supervisor as soon as possible after an incident has occurred

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

The process of conducting a risk assessment for lone working is no different to that followed when assessing any other activity. The risk assessment must be signed and dated, kept up-to-date and reviewed at least annually or in line with local procedures. If developments suggest that the current risk assessment is no longer valid, or that it can be improved, the assessment must be amended. Reviews should take place after an incident as soon as is reasonably practicable or within 10 working days, to see whether there is a need to change working procedures, implement new working practices, make changes to the working environment or provide additional training.

Model assessments may be created for guidance rather than develop a risk assessment for every task by every person and then must be tailored to different environments. The important point is to carry out the assessment systematically, considering the following:

- Identify the hazards associated with the work that is carried out unaccompanied and the environment
- Assess the risks associated with the work, prior to staff working alone, ensuring they are involved in the process and decide on the safe working measures and arrangements to control the risk, including the physical controls, training, supervision and monitoring and contact arrangements
- The limits on what staff can and cannot do whilst working alone
- The risk assessment must be signed and dated, kept up-to-date and reviewed at least annually. If developments suggest that the lone working arrangements are no longer viable, the assessment must be amended. Reviews should take place after an incident to see whether there is a need to change working procedures, implement new working practices
- Implement safe working procedures and arrangements
- Ensure that the information is shared with all relevant parties
- Staff should be encouraged to report any accidents/incidents or near misses which could affect their safety, to allow a proper review of the adequacy of the working arrangements

Risk assessments must consider the following factors:

- The length of time the person may be working alone
- The time of day or night when a person may work alone
- Methods of communication to ensure that staff can be traced
- The location and type of workplace and if travel is involved
- The nature of the work, also considering the equipment to be used and whether it can be carried safely by one person
- The risk of violence to employees, verbal and physical
- Whether particular groups of staff e.g. new and inexperienced staff may be at more risk
- The knowledge of a medical condition of the lone worker, which may increase the risks of working alone, further OH advice may be needed
- Ensure staff know who to contact and what action to take in an emergency
- Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as a fire, equipment failure, illness or accident/incident
- Controlling the risks associated with lone working will also include the relevant training, information, instruction, supervision and possible protective equipment etc.

Local procedures for monitoring lone workers to ensure that they remain safe may include:

- Regular contact between the lone worker and supervisor or “buddy” and supervision using telecommunication systems: radios, CallPlus lone worker system, SoloProtect system or other similar systems designed to assist with staff safety
- Automatic warning devices, which operate if specific signals or codes are not received periodically from the lone worker e.g. manual or automatic personal alarms
- Ensuring that the lone worker has returned to base or home on completion of the task

LONE WORKING CALLPLUS SYSTEM

WCC has a Lone Worker CallPlus System which is an additional tool to support existing good practice and to ensure assistance can be provided if staff are in difficulties. It is a trace system not a tracking system.

The system is operated by the Customer Service Centre during normal working hours (08.00—18.30 Monday to Friday). You will therefore only be able to access it between these times.

To use the service you need:

- A mobile phone charged up and switched on
- Have your personal details and contact registered with the Customer Service Centre
- Know and protect your 4 digit PIN number which will be allocated by the system and notified to you by Customer Service Centre

If you are interested in registering for the Lone Worker CallPlus service please email customerservicecentre@warwickshire.gov.uk . An agreed escalation procedure must be in place before staff can use the Callplus system. The Customer Service Centre must be kept informed of any changes to names/contacts to be called in the event of an escalation procedure.

Employees need to agree with their manager that it is appropriate to use CallPlus and you must register with the Customer Service Centre before using the system by completing a Lone Worker Monitoring form. Please ensure you obtain permission from colleagues before providing their telephone number. You must use the CallPlus system responsibly and co-operate with managers and supervisors in following procedures and practices whether written or verbal, designed to protect your safety.