

# Lone Workers

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# Contents

## **Section 1 – Introduction**

- 1.1 Context
- 1.2 Purpose
- 1.3 Scope

## **Section 2 – Procedure**

- 2.1 Definitions
- 2.2 Lone Worker Hazards
- 2.3 Employers Responsibilities
- 2.4 Responsibilities of Lone Workers
- 2.5 Control Measures for Lone Workers
- 2.6 Provisions in Case of Emergency
- 2.7 Remote/Isolated Locations
- 2.8 Supervision
- 2.9 Additional Support

# Introduction

## **1.1 Context**

Lone workers are exposed to a variety of risks specific to the tasks which they carry out. The company is committed to providing the required safeguards in order to protect employees who work on their own. Lone workers have a responsibility to report any incidents or near misses to the company as soon as they occur.

Off-site workers such as Business Manager and Care Home Delivery Drivers must also comply with all other health and safety policies that apply to the pharmacy.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance to lone workers employed by the company so that they can carry out their duties with the knowledge they require to do so safely.

## **1.3 Scope**

This policy is applicable to all managers and lone workers within the company. The main points of this policy are included in the employee handbook.

# Procedure

## **2.1 Definitions**

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision, for example Business Managers or employees/contractors who works alone are classed as a lone workers.

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 requires the employer to undertake a risk assessment, which will determine whether or not an employee may work alone. Therefore, in general, an employer must assess whether an employee is at significantly higher risk when working alone and if so what control measures are required to ensure employee safety.

## **2.2 Possible lone worker hazards.**

Hazards that lone workers may encounter include:

- Accidents or emergencies arising out of the work, including inadequate provision of first aid.
- Sudden illnesses.
- Inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities.
- Physical violence from members of the public and/or intruders.

## **2.3 Employers responsibilities**

Employers of lone workers should:

- Involve staff or their representatives when undertaking the required risk assessment process;
- Take steps to check control measures are in place (examples of control measures include instruction, training, supervision and issuing protective equipment);
- Review risk assessments annually or when there has been a significant change in working practice or following a reported incident;
- When a risk assessment shows it is not possible for the work to be conducted safely by a lone worker, address that risk by, for example, making arrangements to provide help or back-up; and
- Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, that employer should inform the lone worker's employer of any risks and the required control measures.

## **2.4 Responsibilities of lone workers.**

The employer holds the main responsibility for protecting the safety and health of lone workers. Nonetheless, lone workers themselves have a responsibility to help their employer fulfil this duty, and so they must:

- Take reasonable care to look after their own safety and health.
- Safeguard the safety and health of other people affected by their work.
- Co-operate with their employer's safety and health procedures.
- Use tools and other equipment properly, in accordance with any relevant safety instructions and training they have been given.
- Not misuse equipment provided for their safety and health.
- Report all accidents, injuries, near-misses and other dangerous occurrences including verbal/physical abuse.

## **2.5 Control measures for lone workers**

A risk assessment for lone worker is contained within the risk section of the online H&S management system. The risk assessment prescribes control measures which may be implemented in order to eliminate/minimise the identified risks. Such control measures may include:

- Communication is very important: mobile phone, telephone or radio.
- Controlled periodic checks.
- Automatic warning devices e.g. panic alarms, no movement alarms, automatic distress message. systems, i.e. pre-recorded message sent if not actively cancelled by operative, etc.
- Instruction and training in proper procedures, e.g. code words for potentially violent situations when combined with mobile phone communication.
- Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Conflict management and safety training.
- Health surveillance.
- First-aid kits and training.
- Implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's).
- Locking and securing place of work.
- Implementing correct incident reporting procedures.
- Provision of counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme.

## **2.6 Provisions in the case of an emergency.**

Provisions which should be in place for lone workers to ensure employee safety in the case of an emergency include the following:

- Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies. Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events.
- Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them. Formal procedures include the emergency response template found within the documents section of the online H&S management system.
- Information about emergency procedures and danger areas should be given to lone workers who visit a pharmacy on arrival.
- 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, the risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.
- Additional control measures and guidance are available for employees who drive for work.

## **2.7 Remote/Isolated locations**

For a lone worker at a remote location e.g. Nursing Home, the following factors must be considered:

- How long should the work take and how frequently should the worker report in.
- Has the worker a safe means of travel to and from the location, especially out of normal hours.
- Is there access to adequate rest, hygiene, refreshment, welfare and first aid facilities.
- Can emergency services approach the location without hindrance? Procedures for responding to 'worst-case scenario'.

## **2.8 Supervision**

Risk assessment should help employers decide on the right level of supervision.

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, it is still an employer's duty to ensure their safety and health at work. Supervision can help to ensure that employees understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. Line managers can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty. Supervision of safety and health can often be carried out when checking the progress and quality of the work; it may take the form of periodic site visits combined with discussions in which health and safety issues are raised.

The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle safety and health issues. Employees new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job which presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. The level of supervision required is a management decision, which should be based on the findings of risk assessment, i.e. the higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should not be left to individuals to decide whether they require assistance.

## **2.9 Additional Support**

Additional support for managers and employees is available through the following:

- Business Manager
- Health & Safety Coordinator
- Human Resources Department