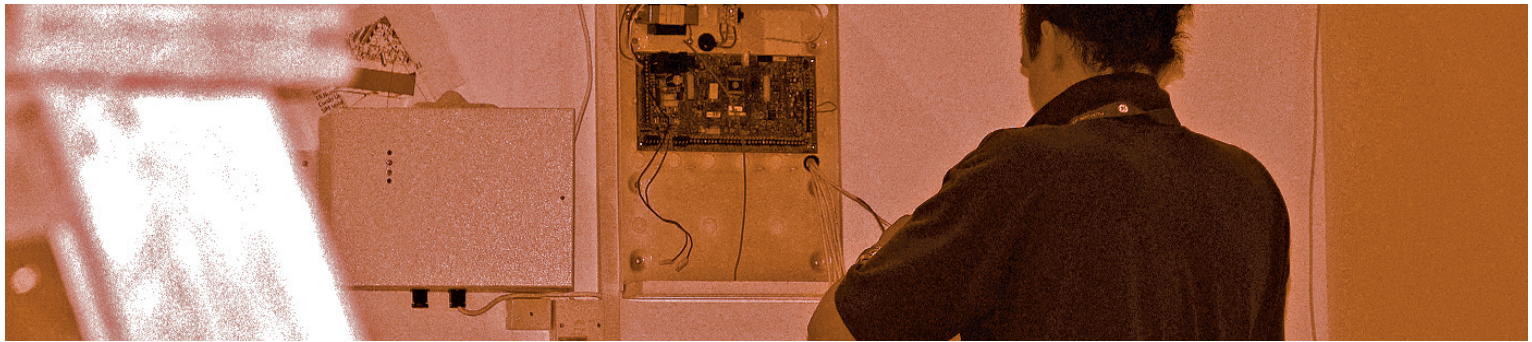


health and safety for  
**lone workers**  
– a guide



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## 1. Introduction

Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. 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 avoid or control risk where necessary.

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

The acceptance of this guide by the company does not in any way absolve the company from that responsibility, nor is it intended to confirm or suggest that the company 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 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.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

### **i. Employer's liability**

There are certain activities where there are specific legal duties e.g. erection of scaffolding and use of unsupported access equipment. However for most circumstances there are no specific legal duties on employers in relation to lone working.

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 of their employees. The employer also has an additional obligation to plant provide safe plant and appliances. 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.

### **ii. Occupier's liability**

Occupiers of premises have a general responsibility to anyone on that premises. This responsibility exists if they employ or engage with the lone worker or not. This law also applies to employers.

## 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 single person can do the work safely  
and
- What arrangements are required to ensure 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 entry and exit to the workplace?
- Is there is adequate illumination, heating and ventilation for the job to be carried out?
- Can all equipment, especially powered tools and access equipment such as ladders can be used safely by one person?
- Can one person perform lifting operations safely?
- Are fire precautions sufficient for the job?

## 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 risks and precautions 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 competencies are achieved.
- There should be regular 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. 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 to emergencies. The risk assessment should have identified foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and lone workers trained in them. Customers 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 in safety: controlling the risks of solitary work, Health and Safety Executive, INDG73(rev), single copy free from HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6FS, tel: 01787 881165, fax 01787 313995
- Working alone: guidance for MSF members and safety representatives, MSF, 1992, available from MSF Head Office, Moreland St., London EC1V 8HA.
- Safe work in confined spaces: Confined Spaces Regulations (1997) Approved Code of Practice. HSE Books L101 (1997) ISBN: 0717614050
- Electricity at Work Regulations (1989). HSE Books SI 1989/635 ISBN: 011096635X
- Memorandum of guidance on the Electricity at Work Regulations (1989). HSE Books HSR25 (1989) ISBN: 0717616029