

Loss prevention standards

# Lone Working

**Good risk management of lone workers is important in preventing injuries and loss or damage. Learn the key risk factors and precautionary measures you can put in place.**



# Lone Working



## Introduction

Working alone is common across all business sectors from security guards, healthcare workers, engineering and maintenance personnel to parking wardens. Under certain circumstances the risk exposures to the individual working alone can significantly increase due to increased communications challenges, out of normal office hours working or remote locations, etc.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines [lone workers](#) as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. This could include an employee working alone on site, “behind closed doors” such as in the domestic care or social care environment, or out of hours, e.g. I.T. services, weekend maintenance.



Employers may find themselves vicariously liable for employees who act negligently when working alone. Good risk management of lone workers is important in preventing injuries and loss or damage, resulting in potential claims.

## Key Risk Factors

Key considerations when assessing the risks to both lone workers and others such as customers/service users or members of the public include:

- Management and supervision requirements – planning of supervisory standards so that lone workers do not feel isolated or disconnected from their team members
- Employee training and competency – what essential knowledge, skills and experience do they need to perform their role safely and not be a risk to others, e.g. vulnerable adults or children?
- Environmental factors – outdoor working, weather conditions, lack of mobile phone signal, isolated locations, local crime rates
- Permanent vs. the use of temporary/agency staff – should agency staff be allowed to work alone?
- Pre-existing health conditions – heart conditions, asthma, epilepsy, etc.
- Risk of allegations of abuse or violence/assault

## The Consequences of Incidents to Employees

Should a lone worker suffer an accident/injury, and this is not dealt with effectively by the organisation then this has potential consequences to the injured person that may affect their longer-term ability to continue lone working. This includes stress, anxiety or depression as a result of the incident, on-going health problems (physical/psychological), low morale, staff retention issues or high absence rates. In addition, there may be financial consequences through enforcement action, fines and claims and damage to the organisation’s reputation.

## Management Strategy

Senior management should establish at the outset what their risk management appetite is for lone working and under what circumstances it should be allowed or prohibited.

Things to consider when deciding to allow lone working, or not, include:

- Recruitment and selection – what are you looking for when recruiting new employees who may be required to work alone?
- Lone Working Policy – clearly set out the requirements around lone working and when it should not occur. Ensure that all significant risks are defined and adequately managed
- Disciplinary procedures for failure to follow rules when lone working, safeguarding procedures or code of conduct. These should be implemented where poor behaviour is observed due to the increased risks when lone working
- Values – how are these embedded in employees at all levels, so that they continue to exhibit these whilst lone working and not under close supervision?
- Communication and monitoring – this may have to be delivered in a different way for those who are not based permanently at an office, factory location, etc.

## When Lone Working Should be Prohibited

Although there may be circumstances where lone working cannot be avoided, serious consideration should be given to the following scenarios and whether company policy should prohibit lone working:

- When dealing with persons with a known history of violence/abuse
- High risk activities such as working at height, confined spaces, unoccupied buildings, high crime areas, night working
- Where an employee may be performing tasks such as personal hygiene or bathing in a social care or healthcare setting, where allegations of abuse may be made
- New starters until they are signed-off as competent to work

## Risk Assessment

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 places a duty on employers to assess and manage risks to their employees and others arising from work activities. Risk assessments should always be conducted prior to commencing any lone working activities. Where possible, generic assessments should be avoided. However, if used these should be revised at local level to ensure all specific issues are taken into consideration and effectively managed.

Risk assessment tips include:

- Can the need to work alone be avoided?
- Are there any specific legal requirements in place that prohibit lone working?
- Have you identified all hazards associated with lone working and implemented effective risk reduction measures?
- What criteria would you use for determining the suitability of employees to work alone – physical health, mental health, competency?

- What are the training requirements for roles where working alone is required?
- What safe systems of work or safe operating procedures are required?
- Do accident reporting/investigation procedures take into consideration lone workers?
- Communication methods; would these be effective should an employee have an accident/incident?
- If immediate assistance was required, how would this be provided?

## Precautionary Measures

Risk assessments should identify the appropriate precautionary measures that need to be in place for lone workers. Examples of measures include:

- Check in arrangements – periodic contact with a supervisor/line manager via telephone or radio
- Emergency call buttons, panic alarms to raise the alarm to a responsible person, e.g. security staff, remote monitoring centre
- Physical security measures – maglock, safe havens, protected counters
- CCTV, in-vehicle cameras or body cameras where deemed necessary, though be mindful of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and individual privacy rights
- Audit and inspection arrangements to monitor that procedures and safe systems of work are being followed
- Supervision – lone workers should not be “out of sight, out of mind”

This list is not exhaustive and undertaking reviews, learning from experience, peer groups and external organisations should be incorporated on a regular basis.

## Training and Information

A high level of training and information is important to ensure that lone workers are competent and equipped to deal with all reasonably foreseeable situations. Training should include:

- The contents of risk assessments, safe systems of work and emergency procedures
- The correct use of communication and security equipment
- Effective range of strategies to manage lone working situations, for example, personal safety and conflict resolution
- Role required competencies to a level that they can operate without close supervision
- If driving is required for their role such as in working at third party locations or domestic premises, driver competencies and driver licence checks should also be included. For further guidance, refer to Aviva Loss Prevention Standards [Driver Licence Checking](#) and [Driver Recruitment: Selection, Induction and Retention](#).

## Checklist

A generic Lone Working Checklist is presented in Appendix 1 which can be tailored to your own organisation.



## Useful Links and References

To view our additional COVID-19 support please visit our [COVID-19 webpage](#)

To find out more, please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or speak to one of our advisors.

**Email us at [riskadvice@aviva.com](mailto:riskadvice@aviva.com) or call 0345 366 6666.\***

\*Calls may be recorded and/or monitored for our joint protection.

# Appendix 1 – Lone Working Checklist



Location	
Date	
Completed by (name and signature)	

	Lone Working Checklist	Y/N	Comments
1.	A lone working policy is in place that is reviewed at least annually or when changes occur?		
2.	Risk assessments identify all activities where lone working may take place?		
3.	Lone working is avoided where possible?		
4.	Activities where lone working is prohibited have been identified and communicated to all employees?		
5.	Accident investigations correctly identify lone working as a contributory cause factor?		
6.	Investigations identify root causes effectively and implement appropriate remedial action?		
7.	Effective training is provided to manage lone working and potential situations that may arise?		
8.	Training and competency records are maintained and up to date?		
9.	There is an inventory, tests and inspections in place for all physical precautionary measures and records are maintained?		
10.	Recruitment and selection criteria are used to ensure new employees are suitable for roles involving lone working?		
11.	Systems are in place to keep up to date with risk exposure changes, e.g. non-injury incident reporting, regular comms with external agencies such as police, local authority, etc?		

12.	Additional Comments:
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14/04/20 V1.2

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