

18 Lone Working

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Introduction

1. A lone worker is a person who undertakes a specific activity unaccompanied or without immediate access to another person for assistance. It is not where individuals experience brief situations in which they find themselves alone, but where individuals are knowingly placed in circumstances where they work without direct or close supervision.

2. Resource limitations and efficiency drives along with advances in telecommunications and information technology (IT) has resulted in more activities potentially being carried out by lone workers. They may be exposed to greater risks than those conducting similar tasks as part of a team or under supervision. It is important therefore to identify Defence personnel who are lone workers, to ensure there is awareness of the potential hazards and for the risks involved to be appropriately managed.

3. For most circumstances, there are no specific legal duties on employers in relation to lone working. However, employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (HSWA) to maintain safe working arrangements and amplified under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations¹ (MHSWR) to carry out a risk assessment of the hazards to which their employees are exposed. It is within this framework that any additional risk faced by lone workers should be generally addressed. If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be put in place.

4. There are, however, specific work situations where the law requires that at least two employees must be engaged in a higher-hazard activity (e.g. work in confined spaces, diving operations, etc.) and therefore lone working is not an option.

Roles and Responsibilities

Managers

5. For a manager, establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers should be no different to organising the safety of other personnel. Managers should

¹ the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (and amendments) – C (1)

be fully familiar with the work personnel are expected to undertake and assess whether the requirements of the task can be met by a person working alone, and without placing that person significantly more at risk than when working with others. A suitable, sufficient and effective system must be implemented to monitor staff working alone. This should include monitoring and periodic checks.

6. Not all Defence personnel will be suitable to undertake lone working activities and the manager must, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that any person who undertakes lone working has no known temporary or long-term medical conditions (mental or physical); which would make them unsuitable for working alone and take into consideration all foreseeable emergency situations. Medical advice should be sought as appropriate from occupational health nursing advisers, civilian welfare officers or Service medical officers, civilian occupational health service, local health and safety advisers or the appropriate TLB safety organisation.

7. The manager must ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out and recorded for the activities undertaken by lone workers. The findings of the risk assessments and any necessary control measures implemented must be brought to the attention of the lone worker and the manager satisfied that the lone worker understands the control measures and the risks arising from the hazards associated with the activity. Risk assessments shall consider:

- a. if the working environment presents a special risk to the lone worker (e.g. cramped, excessive temperatures, poor visibility, isolated, slippery / wet, below ground level, etc.);
- b. if there is safe access and egress (if temporary access equipment (e.g. ladders) is required, can it be handled safely by one person);
- c. if all of the plant and equipment, substances and articles; involved in the work can be safely handled by one person;
- d. if there is a method of communicating with the person working alone and how can that person summon help if needed (e.g. telephone, radio, personal alarm, panic button, etc.);
- e. foreseeable emergency situations (e.g. fire, equipment failures, illness, accidents, deterioration in weather conditions, assaults, etc.); and
- f. whether a permit to work system is in operation for the specific task.

8. Managers must define the limits of what can and cannot be done whilst working alone; specify how and when the lone worker should stop work or seek advice in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training.

9. Managers are to ensure that lone workers fully understand the hazards associated with the activity and the risks arising from the hazards, the necessary precautions to remove or control the risks, and be sufficiently experienced and competent.

10. Procedures need to be put in place to monitor the safety and general well-being of lone workers, and include, as a minimum, a check at the end of the working period to ensure that the lone worker has safely vacated the work area and is returning to their base or home.

11. The extent of supervision required is a management decision which should be based on the findings of the risk assessment. It is vital that Defence personnel who are to work alone are fully involved in the planning of the work and in setting up the systems that will ensure their safety. Their views must be taken into account and the likelihood of needing assistance should be fully discussed.

12. The responsibility for ensuring Safe Systems of Work are implemented for lone working lies with the person who manages the work; this responsibility cannot be delegated to the lone worker although they will ultimately be implementing it. Therefore, the manager shall periodically visit the lone worker (frequency of visits will be dependent on the risk) to observe working practices and confirm that control measures are effective and being complied with and keep a record of such visits.

13. Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations and any additional emergency arrangements required must be identified and all related personnel trained to implement them. Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities for treating minor injuries and if a habitual lone worker, first aid training to an appropriate level may be required.

All Personnel

14. As the management control that can be exercised over lone workers is limited, Defence personnel working alone often have a more active role in managing their own health and safety.

15. Lone workers must fully understand and implement all management controls put in place to enable the lone working activity to be conducted safely and keep within the scope of the agreed lone work and work areas. Where a lone worker identifies that they cannot implement all management controls they must not start work, and are to contact their manager for advice, e.g. conditions at a work location have changed since their last visit. It is essential that lone workers co-operate with their manager bringing to their attention any concerns that they may have about any workplace health and safety issues, in particular any new hazards that arise during the lone working activity.

16. If circumstance dictates that an activity becomes an unplanned lone working one, the activity should be stopped (if it is safe to do so) and the manager informed of the change in circumstances, any reason(s) why they would be unable to work alone, and request details of any additional control measures they should take prior to recommencing the activity.

17. When travelling abroad, in the UK or working in a remote location, 112 (999 works in the same way in the UK) can be dialled free of charge from any telephone or mobile phone to contact the emergency services (Ambulances, Fire & Rescue Service and the Police) in the European Union (EU), as well as several other

countries in the world. EU Directive E112 (a location-enhanced version of 112) requires mobile phone networks to provide emergency services with whatever information they have about the location a mobile call was made.

18. Even if the exact location is unknown, using 999 / 112 on a mobile phone will allow the system to pinpoint the precise location within about the first 30 seconds of a call to the telecom operator and the operator automatically transmits the location information to the emergency centre so that assistance can be provided as quickly as possible.

19. The GSM mobile phone standard designates 112 as an emergency number, so it will work on GSM phones even in North America where GSM systems redirect emergency calls to 911, or Australia where emergency calls are redirected to 000 (although location information may not be automatically transmitted). 112 can be dialled on most GSM phones even if the phone is locked.

Retention of Records

20. All records including Risk Assessments, etc should be kept in accordance with JSP 375, Volume 1, Chapter 39.

Related Documents

21. The following documents should be consulted in conjunction with this chapter:

a. JSP 375 Volume 1:

- (1) Chapter 2 - Office & General Workplace Safety;
- (2) Chapter 5 - First Aid at Work;
- (3) Chapter 8 - Risk Assessment;
- (4) Chapter 19 - The Health and Safety of Young Persons;
- (5) Chapter 20 - New and Expectant Mothers at Work;
- (6) Chapter 21 - Managing Staff Remotely; and
- (7) Chapter 39 - Retention of Records.

b. Other MOD Publications;

- (1) DSA01.1 – Defence Policy for Health, Safety and Environmental Protection;
- (2) DSA01.2 Chapter 2 – Requirement for Safety and Environmental Management Systems in Defence; and

c. Legislation and Guidance:

- (1) [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations;](#)
- (2) [HSE ACoP L24 – Workplace health, safety and welfare;](#) and
- (3) [HSE- INDG73 – Working Alone in Safety; Controlling the Risks of Solitary Work.](#)