

18 Lone Working

This chapter is split into two parts:

Part 1: Directive. This part provides the direction that **must** be followed to help you comply with (keep to) health and safety law, Defence policy and Government policy.

Part 2: Guidance. This part provides the guidance and good practice that **should** be followed and will help you to keep to this policy.

Contents

Title	Page
Amendment record	1
Key terms and definitions	2
Scope	2
Part 1: Directive	
Introduction	3
Background	3
Key health and safety legislation	3
Policy statements	4
Part 2: Guidance	
PLAN - identify problems and opportunities	8
DO - implement potential solutions	9
CHECK - assess the results	10
ACT - implement improved solutions	11
Retention of records	11
Related documents	11

Amendment record

This chapter has been reviewed by the Directorate of Defence Safety (DDS) together with relevant subject matter experts and key stakeholders. Any suggestions for amendments **should** be sent to DDS-GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk

Version No	Date published	Text Affected	Authority
1.2	Oct 2022	Interim update post-handover of policy from DSA to D HS&EP.	Dir HS&EP
1.3	5 May 2023	Release of two-part structure.	DDS

Key terms and definitions

The following table sets out definitions of some of the key terms used in this chapter. Definitions for other JSP 375 health and safety terms are given in the master glossary on the [JSP 375 Defnet](#) or [Gov.UK](#) page.

Accountable Person (AP)	The person whose terms of reference state that they are responsible for making sure there are suitable and sufficient systems in place to control health and safety risks in their unit, estate (site) or platform. This term is used in place of CO, HoE, OC, Station Commander and so on, or as decreed by the Defence organisations.
Commander	A military person responsible for planning activities, supervising activities, and making sure that personnel under their area of responsibility are safe. This term refers to a role rather than the rank of Commander, and it can be a permanent or temporary role (for example, lasting for the duration of a training exercise). In parts of Defence this person could be referred to as a 'responsible person.'
Competent person	A person who has the training, skills, experience, and knowledge necessary to perform a task safely, and is able to apply them. Other factors, such as attitude and physical ability, can also affect someone's competence. See www.hse.gov.uk/competence/what-is-competence.htm for information on competence.
Lone working	A lone worker is a person who undertakes a specific activity unaccompanied or without immediate access to another person for assistance.
Manager	A person responsible for managing or supervising staff, planning activities and making sure that personnel under their area of responsibility are safe. This could be a permanent or temporary role, and in parts of Defence this person could be referred to as a 'line manager,' a 'responsible person' or a 'delivery manager.'
Occurrence	Refers to the terms Accident / Incident, Near Miss, Unsafe Act, Unsafe Condition and Dangerous Occurrence.
Remote working	Personnel habitually working at locations that are remote from their management chain of command and parent organisation, whether it be working on the move, working from home or working from satellite locations.

Must and should

Where this chapter says '**must**,' this means that the action is a compulsory requirement.

Where this chapter says '**should**,' this means that the action is not a compulsory requirement but is considered best practice to comply with the policy.

Scope

This policy applies to all those employed by Defence (military or civilian) as well as those working on behalf of Defence (for example, contractors). It applies to all Defence activities carried out in any location (UK or overseas).

Part 1: Directive

Introduction

1. This chapter sets out the direction and guidance on the health and safety issues related to Defence personnel working alone. 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 supervision or immediate access to others.

Background

2. Resource limitations and efficiency drives along with advances in telecommunications and information technology, has resulted in more activities potentially being carried out by lone workers. Lone workers 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, make sure there is awareness of the potential hazards and for the risks involved to be appropriately managed.

3. Employers are required to manage any health and safety risks before people can work alone. This requirement is covered by the [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)

4. Lone workers are not to be placed at greater risk due to them working alone and 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.

5. In addition to the practical reasons why lone working may not be possible, there may also be legislation that requires certain activities to be undertaken by more than one person, for example higher-hazard activity such as working in confined spaces, diving operations, and so on, therefore lone working is not an option. In the event you are unsure if lone working is possible, legal or health and safety advice should be sought.

Key health and safety legislation

6. Employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (HSWA) to maintain safe working arrangements for their employees. There is a further duty on employers under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to carry out a risk assessment of the hazards to which their employees are exposed.

7. The principles of this legislation are extended worldwide by [Secretary of State for Defence policy statement on health, safety and environmental protection](#).

Policy statements

8. Defence has established the following policy statements to provide direction on the managing of staff working alone, which **must** be followed.

- a. **Policy Statement 1.** Commanders, managers, Accountable Persons (APs) and those who are responsible for planning workplace activities **must** determine where lone working is practically possible and determine where statutory or policy requirements permit lone working.
- b. **Policy Statement 2.** Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure that appropriate risk assessment is carried out and recorded if lone working is planned or identified and **must**, so far as is reasonably practicable, make sure that lone workers are not placed at greater risk due to them working alone.
- c. **Policy Statement 3.** Personnel **must** make sure that they comply with all safety control measures and bring any health and safety concerns that they may have about the workplace or work activity to the attention of their commander, manager or AP.
- d. **Policy Statement 4.** Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure that periodic health and safety checks of working practices and arrangements are conducted and any control measures that have been put in place are effective.
- e. **Policy Statement 5.** Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure arrangements are put in place to monitor the health, safety and welfare of Defence personnel who work alone and make sure that any safety improvements are resourced and implemented when identified and approved.

Policy Statement 1

Commanders, managers, Accountable Persons (APs) and those who are responsible for planning workplace activities **must** determine where lone working is practically possible and determine where statutory or policy requirements permit lone working.

9. Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers **must** be no different to organising the safety of other personnel. Commanders, managers and APs **must** 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 without placing that person significantly more at risk than when working with others.

10. If lone working is identified as necessary, the work **must** be adequately planned to make sure all policy requirements are effectively met, reviewed and amended where necessary. Some lone working activities might be conducted remotely from a person's parent establishment, unit or site. In these circumstances, JSP 375 Chap 21 Managing Staff Remotely, **must** be consulted.

11. Commanders, managers and APs **must**, so far as is reasonably practicable, identify personnel who might be vulnerable to the hazards of lone working. This includes identification of any known temporary or long-term medical conditions (mental or physical), which could make lone working unsafe, taking into consideration all foreseeable emergency situations.

12. Commanders, managers and APs **must** define the limits of what can and cannot be done whilst working alone and specify how and when the lone worker is to stop work or seek advice in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their competency.

13. When planning lone working activities, commanders, managers and APs **must** take into account the views of the personnel who will be conducting the work.

14. Not all work can be conducted alone, there may be practical reasons where the activity requires more than one person, such as manual handling activities. In some higher-hazard activities such as, work in confined spaces or diving operations, legislation requires that at least two or more employees **must** be engaged. Therefore, lone working is not an option. Commanders, managers and APs **must** therefore make sure that lone working is an option before approving a lone working activity. Health and safety advisers can be consulted to provide help and guidance on the management of high-hazard activities.

Policy Statement 2

Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure that appropriate risk assessment is carried out and recorded if lone working is planned or identified and **must**, so far as is reasonably practicable, make sure that lone workers are not placed at greater risk due to them working alone.

15. Commanders, managers and APs **must** identify hazards and the risks that may arise and decide whether reasonable steps are being taken to manage them. This **must** be done by undertaking suitable and sufficient risk assessment (JSP 375, Volume 1 Chapter 8 - Safety risk assessment and safe systems of work) following the five-step risk assessment process:

- a. **Step 1** – Identify the hazards;
- b. **Step 2** – decide who might be harmed and how;
- c. **Step 3** – evaluate the risks and identify suitable and sufficient control measures;
- d. **Step 4** – record and implement findings; and
- e. **Step 5** – review the risk assessment and update as necessary.

16. Those undertaking the risk assessment **must** be competent and **must** engage with the personnel who are conducting the work activity to make sure all hazards are suitably identified; safe working practices are effective and control measures are workable.

17. The findings of the risk assessment and any control measures implemented **must** be communicated to all personnel engaged in or affected by the activity.

18. Commanders, managers and APs **must** be satisfied that the control measures are effective, suitable and clearly communicated to all affected personnel, fully implemented, maintained and used properly. The person conducting the lone working activity **must** be competent to do so.

Policy Statement 3

Personnel **must** make sure that they comply with all safety control measures and bring any health and safety concerns that they may have about the workplace or work activity to the attention of their commander, manager or AP.

19. All personnel **must** comply with the safety control measures implemented following risk assessment. Personnel **must**:

- a. take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of anyone else who might be affected by their acts or omissions;
- b. co-operate with their commanders, managers and APs as necessary to allow compliance with statutory and policy requirements;
- c. make sure they report any occurrences or ill-health to their commander, manager or AP in accordance with their parent establishment, unit or site and Defence safety occurrence reporting procedures;
- d. inform their commander, manager or AP of any health, safety or welfare concerns without delay; and
- e. not deliberately or recklessly interfere with, or misuse, anything provided in the interests of health, safety and welfare.

20. Lone workers **must** fully implement all management control measures put in place to enable the lone working activity to be conducted safely. Where a lone worker identifies that they cannot implement all management control measures they **must** not start work and are to contact their commander, manager or AP for advice and guidance, e.g., conditions at a work location have changed since their last visit.

Policy Statement 4

Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure that periodic health and safety checks of working practices and arrangements are conducted and any control measures that have been put in place are effective.

21. Commanders, managers and APs **must** have arrangements in place to provide assurance that lone working practices are being conducted safely. The level of checks and their frequency is dependent on the risk.

22. Health and safety advisers can be consulted to provide help and guidance on the best way to provide assurance of safe working practices.

Policy Statement 5

Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure arrangements are put in place to monitor the health, safety and welfare of Defence personnel who work alone and make sure that any safety improvements are resourced and implemented when identified and approved.

23. Commanders, managers and APs **must** make sure that a suitable, sufficient and an effective system is put in place to monitor the safety and welfare of staff working alone.

24. Commanders, managers and APs **must** review risk assessments and make sure that the workplace and work activities remain safe and that all control measures and welfare arrangements are suitable and being maintained. If anyone believes or identifies that the control measures being applied are ineffective, or additional control measures are required, the commander, manager or AP **must** be informed.

25. Where risks are thought not to be effectively managed, the commander, manager or AP **must** make sure the risk assessment is reviewed and, where necessary, the control measures amended or additional control measures implemented. These actions **must** also be taken following an occurrence. In these circumstances the commander, manager or AP **must** decide if restricting, stopping or pausing the activity is required.

Part 2: Guidance

This part provides the guidance and good practice that **should** be followed using the Plan, Do, Check, Act approach and will help you to keep to this policy.

PLAN - identify problems and opportunities

Policy Statement 1.

Commanders, managers, Accountable Persons (APs) and those who are responsible for planning workplace activities must determine where lone working is practically possible and determine where statutory or policy requirements permit lone working.

1. Not all work activities can be conducted alone and not all personnel are able to work alone. At the planning stage both the activity and the individual **should** be considered and consulted to identify if lone working is practicable and acceptable. If personnel are identified as vulnerable to the hazards of lone working due to a temporary or long-term medical conditions (mental or physical), medical advice **should** be sought as appropriate.
2. Checks **should** be made during planning to identify if lone working is a possibility. Some activities such as diving and confined space working, legally require more than one person. Other activities might need more than one person due to the risk level e.g., the threat of violence or a manual handling risk due to the equipment being used.
3. The extent of support or supervision required is a management decision which **should** be based on the findings of the risk assessment. Defence personnel who are to work alone **should** be fully involved in the planning of the work and in setting up the systems that will ensure their safety. Their views **should** be taken into account and the likelihood of needing assistance **should** be fully discussed.
4. When identifying lone working activities do not forget to include people such as drivers, security staff and some remote workers, all of whom might be working alone.
5. When planning lone working, commanders, managers and APs **should** not forget the affects of lone working on the individual. Where necessary, checks **should** be conducted to identify if an individual has any known temporary or long-term medical conditions (mental or physical), which might make them unsuitable for working alone. This **should** include consideration of all foreseeable emergency situations. In the first instance, talking with the proposed lone worker **should** help identify any concerns and correct any misunderstandings.
6. Health and safety advisers can be consulted to provide help and guidance on the best way to manage lone workers. Where appropriate, medical advice **should** be sought from Service medical officers or civilian occupational health services.

DO - implement potential solutions

Policy Statement 2.

Commanders, managers and APs must make sure that appropriate risk assessment is carried out and recorded if lone working is planned or identified and must, so far as is reasonably practicable, make sure that lone workers are not placed at greater risk due to them working alone.

7. **Risk Assessment** – The risk assessment **should** consider all aspects of the work environment, the persons undertaking the work e.g., whether they are vulnerable, as well as the activities being conducted. The five-steps risk assessment process, as described in JSP 375, Volume 1 Chapter 8 (Safety risk assessment and safe systems of work), is a logical process that can be used to cover all assessment requirements.

8. When risk assessing lone working, commanders, managers and APs **should** consider all hazards including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. if the working environment presents a special risk to the lone worker (e.g., cramped, excessive temperatures, poor visibility, isolated, slippery or wet, below ground level, and so on);
- b. if there is safe access and egress (if temporary access equipment 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 if the person is able to summon help if needed;
- e. foreseeable emergency situations (e.g., fire, equipment failures, illness, safety occurrences, deterioration in weather conditions, assault and so on) and access to suitable first aid and support;
- f. work location issues (e.g., remote locations or working abroad where emergency contact details may differ); and
- g. whether a permit to work system (JSP 375, Volume 1 Chapter 30 – Permit to work) is required for the specific task.

9. The risk assessment **should** cover the whole activity and **should** identify the impact individual hazards, such as lone working, have on the control of all other hazards.

10. If a hazard cannot be eliminated, the commander, manager or AP **should** assess the residual risk with the existing control measures in place and consider whether the existing control measures are adequate or if action is needed to reduce the risk further.

Policy Statement 3.

Personnel must make sure that they comply with all safety control measures and bring any health and safety concerns that they may have about the workplace or work activity to the attention of their commander, manager or AP.

11. 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.

12. It is essential that lone workers co-operate with their commander, manager or AP in bringing to their attention any concerns that they may have about any work activities or workplace health, safety or welfare issues, in particular any new hazards that arise during the lone working activity.

13. If circumstance dictates that there is a change to the activity which results in an unplanned lone working situation, the activity **should** be stopped (if it is safe to do so) and the commander, manager or AP informed of the change in circumstances. Following dynamic risk assessment, the commander, manager or AP **should** provide direction and guidance on the revised or additional control measures to be taken prior to the activity recommencing.

14. Lone workers **should** be familiar with the emergency response procedures relating to the activity that they are undertaking and all personnel **should** be competent to implement them. Lone workers **should** have access to adequate first aid facilities for treating minor injuries. Following risk assessment, some lone workers may require first aid training (see JSP 375 Vol 1 Chap 5 First Aid).

CHECK - assess the results

Policy Statement 4.

Commanders, managers and APs must make sure that periodic health and safety checks of working practices and arrangements are conducted and any control measures that have been put in place are effective.

15. Safety checks are an effective way of making sure the control measures identified by the risk assessment are being suitably implemented and are effective in reducing risk to an acceptable level. JSP 375 Volume 1 Chapter 4 (Workplace Inspections) provides guidance on what needs to be checked and how.

16. Visits to the lone working site, where practical and possible, can help establish if the control measures being implemented are suitable and sufficient, especially in circumstances where arrangements are liable for change. Where deemed appropriate commanders, managers or APs **should** decide on how best to conduct site inspections, dependent on the risks posed and stability of the control measures that have been implemented.

17. Health and safety advisers can be consulted to provide help and guidance on the best way to inspect lone working activities.

ACT - implement improved solutions

Policy Statement 5.

Commanders, managers and APs must make sure arrangements are put in place to monitor the health, safety and welfare of Defence personnel who work alone and make sure that any safety improvements are resourced and implemented when identified and approved.

18. The monitoring of lone workers is often dependent on effective communication. Regular scheduled contact with lone workers **should** help keep commanders, managers and APs aware of any problems or issues that may impact the safety and welfare of the lone worker. Where possible, a check at the end of the working period to ensure that the lone worker has safely vacated the work area is advisable.

19. Where safety improvements are identified, either through inspection, communication with those conducting the activity, changes to legislation or policy, changes in available equipment, technologies or following an occurrence, commanders and managers **should** review and update their risk assessment control measures at the earliest possible time.

Retention of records

20. Risk assessments and associated documents **should** be kept for at least three years after they expire, and in line with JSP 375 Volume 1 Chapter 39 of (Retention of records).

Related documents

21. The following documents are related to this chapter:

a. **JSP 375, Volume 1.**

- (1) Chapter 02 - Military and civilian workplace safety
- (2) Chapter 04 - Workplace inspections
- (3) Chapter 05 - First Aid
- (4) Chapter 08 - Safety risk assessment and safe systems of work
- (5) Chapter 10 - Manual handling
- (6) Chapter 16 - Safety occurrence reporting and investigation
- (7) Chapter 17 - Stress in the workplace
- (8) Chapter 21 - Managing staff remotely
- (9) Chapter 28 - Confined spaces
- (10) Chapter 30 - Permit to work
- (11) Chapter 39 - Retention of records

b. **Other Defence Publications;**

- (1) JSP 815 - Defence Safety Management System
- (2) Service Personnel Policy - Service Conditions documents
- (3) Policy, Rules & Guidance documents (civilian personnel)

c. **Legislation and Guidance;**

- (1) [Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)
- (2) [Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999](#)
- (3) [HSE ACoP L24 - Workplace health, safety and welfare](#)
- (4) [HSE- INDG73 - Protecting lone workers: How to manage the risks of working alone](#)