

# **Navigators**

## **Lone Working Policy**



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**Learning, Developing, Enjoying**

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## INTRODUCTION

Many employees work alone as part of their normal day-to-day work. Working alone can put people in a vulnerable position. It may be more difficult for them to summon help if things go wrong or if their health or safety is at risk. Whatever the reason, Navigators believes that employees working alone should not be at greater risk in their jobs than other workers.

## DEFINITIONS

### Lone Worker:

*Anyone whose activities involve a large proportion of their working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or without supervision.*

Lone working does not mean a person must be working in complete isolation all of the time. For example, a cleaner may enter a building whilst it is still very busy, but may be left alone to finish their shift. Some common examples are:

- Any person working in isolation in a classroom, large workshop or office building
- Teachers or Staff visiting pupils
- Off site activities
- 121 Student Programmes
- After School activities / clubs
- Office / Building cleaning staff
- Cemetery workers
- Tradesmen working in void properties
- Solitary workers in kitchens
- Home visitors
- Drivers
- Field / service engineers
- Surveyors and inspectors
- Emergency call-out personnel
- Street crime wardens
- Street environment managers
- Street cleansing operatives
- Traffic wardens
- Enforcement inspectors
- Security staff
- Grounds maintenance operatives
- Persons working outside normal 'office' hours and weekends (early or late shift, night workers)

## **COMPETENCY**

The School is responsible for ensuring that each employee it appoints is competent to safely carry out whatever tasks are assigned to him or her.

A person shall be regarded as being competent where he or she has:

- Sufficient training
- Relevant experience (or knowledge) and
- 'Other qualities' to enable him or her to properly carry out the work

Solely the attainment of appropriate qualifications or an adequate level of training does not achieve competence. Experience, understanding of the relevant current best practice and awareness of the limitations of ones own experience and knowledge are of equal importance.

Managers should check training records and assess the individual's personality for suitability to work alone.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations requires the employer to assess the risk associated with work – in this instance, a Lone Working Risk Assessment.

The key to maximizing safety wherever lone work is under consideration is the performance of a satisfactory risk assessment, which should address two main features:

- Whether the work can be done safely by a lone worker, 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 systematic monitoring of the hazards of lone working by qualified supervisors / managers.

## **HAZARDS**

### **Hazards of working alone**

People who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other workers. However, for lone workers, the risk of harm is often greater by virtue of inability to raise the alarm and summon assistance. It is essential this is taken into account when the risk assessment is carried out.

The assessment should confirm whether one, unaccompanied person, can safely do the work.

Managers should consider:

- Whether the job imposes extra demands on the lone worker's physical or mental stamina or capability
- Whether the lone worker suffers from any pre-existing medical condition that might have a bearing on the risk assessment
- The remoteness or isolation of workplaces
- Lack of communication
- The possibility of interference, including violence or criminal activity from other persons

If the Risk Assessment indicates that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be put in place.

The employer should demonstrate that a lone worker is not exposed to extra risk compared to a group of employees doing the same job. Where the job involves a significant risk of violence from the public, alternative work methods should be considered.

### Remoteness and Isolation

For a lone worker at remote locations, the following factors should also be considered:

- How long should the work take
- 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' emergencies must be in place.

### **Proceeding direct from home to 'site' and from 'site' direct to home**

Some lone workers proceed direct from home to their first workplace without reporting into a central point (clocking-on) and from their last job and go home, again, without clocking off.

Managers must put into place a robust procedure to track the safe movement of such lone workers to ensure, in particular, they have arrived for work, that they are working safely during the work period and that employees have completed their final task safely and gone home.

## Condition of the workplace

Appropriate conditions are:

- There is a safe means of entry and exit to the workplace
- There is adequate illumination, heating and ventilation for the job to be carried out
- All equipment, especially powered tools and access equipment such as ladders, can be used safely by one person
- Lifting operations can be performed safely by one person
- Fire precautions are sufficient for the workplace

## Communications and personal alarms

In most instances, managers will need to consider how the lone worker will communicate with supervision or colleagues. Appropriate communications should be maintained with the lone worker especially when continuing supervision is required. The lone worker should have ready access to a means of two-way communication. The system should enable the worker to raise the alarm or be located accurately if assistance is required.

## Preventing Violence

Managers must design procedures to minimize the risk of violence from the public, e.g. elimination of handling cash, constant changes of route when transporting valuables, adequate building security for out-of-hours working. Women working alone are not at any greater risk than any other employee. Rooms used for confidential interviews should be equipped with a hidden alarm.

## Medical suitability

Two points need to be determined:

- Does the job impose any extra demands on the lone worker's physical or mental stamina?
- Does the lone worker suffer from any pre-existing medical condition or illness that might increase the risks of the job?

## Information and Training

Sufficient training and information must be provided to the lone workers to enable him / her to identify hazards and take appropriate action to avoid them. She / he must be entitled to leave the workplace if there is serious and imminent danger.

## Permits to Work

These are detailed, written instructions provided by the employer on the performance of hazardous activities such as electrical testing, etc. They should specify:

- Check-in arrangements
- Tests of communications equipment
- Length of the work period
- Suitable first-aid equipment
- Equipment, tools and electrical safety checks
- Suitable personal protective equipment
- Suitable manual handling
- Arrangements in bad weather
- Exit to safety after job

## Defining working limits

Managers must establish clear procedures, setting limits of what can and what cannot be done whilst working alone. Clearly, this is impossible to define in general terms but examples might include permission to replenish fuel tanks but not to remove guards or covers in order to investigate a stoppage of machinery. The general precautionary principle of 'if in doubt, ask a supervisor' must be advocated.

## **SAFE SYSTEMS OF WORK**

Having completed the assessment of risk, managers should then prepare and issue clear and concise written instructions for the lone worker to follow. In preparing the Safe System of Work, managers may wish to consider the following:

- Required ability of employees
  - Professional training and qualifications
  - Knowledge
  - Background
  - Experience
  - Medical fitness
- Suitability of equipment
  - Quality of hand tools
  - Level of PPE supplied by employer
  - Insulation of portable lighting and other electrical appliances
- Means of communication
- Provision of treatment of injuries

Portable first aid kit Availability  
of first-aider

- Emergency and accident procedures
  - Means of summoning help
  - Means of raising the alarm
  - Rescue plans and equipment
  - Fire fighting equipment already available at the workplace
- Maintaining some visual form of office / work diary / itinerary which colleagues are aware of (e.g. an office 'whereabouts' whiteboard)
- Training e.g. for safe use of specialized equipment and processes, etc.
- Direct accompanied supervision, e.g. for trainees, young people or new recruits, who must be confirmed as competent to work alone before supervision is relaxed to the level of occasional accompanied visits.

## SUMMARY

Working alone is not illegal but it can bring additional risks to a work activity.

The School and the Council have developed policies and procedures to control risks and protect employees. Managers and supervisors must make employees aware of these procedures and through close supervision, ensure employees follow those procedures. The three most important things managers must be certain of are that:

- The lone worker has full knowledge of the hazards and risks to which he or she is being exposed
- A colleague or supervisor knows the whereabouts of a lone worker at all times throughout the work period and what he or she is doing
- The lone worker knows what to do if something goes wrong.

## APPENDIX A – HAZARD SPOTTING

Managers and supervisors may wish to consider many aspects of the work, the workplace and the individual when assessing risk of Lone Working.

The two principal considerations must always be:

- Whether the work can be done safely by a Lone Worker
- What arrangements are required to ensure the lone worker is at no more risk than employees working together

**This list is not definitive.**

Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remoteness or isolation of workplace</li> <li>• Remoteness or isolation of worker from supervisor and / or colleagues</li> <li>• Material condition of the workplace – structural damage – walls, roof, ceilings, floors, fire damage, flood, etc.</li> <li>• Communications failure – no back-up system</li> <li>• Task located in known 'high risk' neighbourhood</li> <li>• Medical unsuitability of employee</li> <li>• Psychological unsuitability of employee</li> <li>• Insufficient time for one person to achieve the task</li> <li>• Manual handling operations – clearly beyond the capability of one person</li> <li>• Taking 'short cuts' to make task easier or to complete task early.</li> <li>• Lack of relevant, recent training</li> </ul>
Workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dangerous structure – floors, ceilings, stairs, overloaded floors, floor boards cut through</li> <li>• Unsuitable means of access / egress – into workplace, roof space, etc.</li> <li>• Insufficient lighting – passageways, stairs, etc, 'void property' boarded up?</li> <li>• Slip / trip and fall – external approach to workplace</li> <li>• Slip / trip and fall – internal loose carpets, stairs,</li> <li>• obstructions on floors</li> <li>• Fall from height – ladders, step ladders, trestles, hop-ups, roof space, etc</li> </ul>

- Things falling onto employee – shelves, cupboards, items stacked / stored
- Dangerous / harmful substances – unidentified substances found in the workplace
- Exposure to vermin, rodents, flying / crawling insects
- Biological hazards
- Sharps – broken glass, jagged metal, spikes, etc
- Discarded needles – concealed needles
- Gas escape – mains supply not adequately isolated /capped off
- Exposed to electrical conductors – mains supply not adequately isolated