

Relevant Legislation

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

The following arrangements and information has been written to provide staff with a guidance document relating to lone working and the potential problems it can cause. The document sets out specific procedures which must be followed when working alone and staff are reminded that under health and safety law:

- A statutory duty is placed on all employees to take reasonable care of themselves and others who may be affected by their acts or omissions whilst at work.
- Employees are required to cooperate with their employer on matters of health and safety.

General

Employees can be at risk when working alone in the following circumstances:

- They find themselves in a remote, unoccupied location or they have an accident or mishap out of office hours. They are then unable to summon assistance as no one is aware of their whereabouts or their expected return time. The alarm would not be raised as the mechanism would not be in place to trigger this. This could include home-working or those who travel on behalf of NCC. Home-working is covered within a separate County Council policy. This is being reviewed as part of Project Workwell.
- They attempt to deal with a difficult situation with a member of the public or service user in an isolated area; the member of the public could then abuse them.
- They attempt to deal with a difficult situation with a member of the public or service user in an isolated area and then have allegations made regarding their conduct.

Each area of County Council activity presents different risks. A detailed risk assessment and associated lone worker procedure should be developed for each Team within the County Council where this is a relevant consideration. It should not be possible for staff to place themselves in high risk situations without a procedure in place which guarantees that the member of staff has left the premises safely at the end of the day.

Arrangements for Lone Working

Initial Evaluation

Before any lone working takes place it is essential that a formal detailed risk assessment is undertaken. The County Council's 'model' format can be utilised to simplify this task. This should cover any foreseeable hazards that may be encountered. Clearly, there will be a range of risk levels that staff will encounter and these can be categorised as low, medium or high and will therefore require different levels of precautionary action.

Low risk is when work consists of normal travel and involves contact with other colleagues within normal working time. This will not involve work in remote areas, or places with which contact may be difficult or where the need to maintain contact with the office will be minimal. Consideration must be taken of the potential for the situation to change and the possibility of a task becoming a medium or high risk activity.

Medium risk is work that could entail working alone, in locations where contact may be limited or perhaps staff would be involved in an activity which would not normally be classed as low risk.

High risk activities will involve one or more of the following:

- Remote areas/difficult terrain.
- Work outside of 'standard' working hours.
- Areas of poor communication for mobile phones or lack of public telephones in rural areas.
- Areas where problems have previously been encountered, such as violence or vandalism.
- Initial meeting with a new client or member of public.
- Potentially hostile/sensitive situations.

If members of staff are unsure as to the level of risk, they should discuss it with colleagues and/or their Line Manager or treat it as high risk.

Making Arrangements for Lone Working

Contact Details

A colleague should be nominated by the line manager at base as a contact point for the lone worker. They should be aware of the lone worker's daily movements and expected completion time. Should an individual colleague not be available for nomination, then a central contact point, such as the lone worker's office, should be nominated.

The lone worker should provide the following details to their nominated contact:

- Make, model and colour of vehicle.
- Car registration number.
- Home telephone number.
- Alternative contact telephone number if there is no contact at the home address.
- Mobile telephone number.

Arrangements should be in place to ensure that these details are kept up to date at all times.

Low Risk Arrangements

Staff should leave basic details at the central information point, including location, whom they are meeting, a contact telephone number and arrangements for return.

Staff *must* ensure that they report their safe return to work or home to the nominated contact.

Medium Risk Arrangements

The lone worker's itinerary should be completed and left at the central information point or with the nominated contact. An office white board can be used for this purpose. It may be necessary to report in at designated times to a colleague, as well as leaving detailed information. Use should be made of mobile phones.

Staff *must* ensure that they report their safe return to work or home to the nominated contact.

High Risk Arrangements

The procedure for the lone worker should include the following:

- An itinerary should be completed and left at the central information point or with the nominated contact. An office white board can be used for this purpose.
- The use of mobile phones and/or identification of pre-arranged times to make contact with base. Staff should check their mobile phone signal and battery charge immediately before embarking on an activity. If the telephone is out of range it may be necessary to abandon the activity or visit.
- Personal protective equipment, such as an attack alarm, may also be deemed necessary.
- Being accompanied by another person and improved contact with other colleagues may also be necessary.
- An Appropriate electronic monitoring system may be required in very high risk situations
- Staff *must* ensure that they report the following to the nominated contact
 - Arrival at the work location
 - Departure from the venue
 - Safe return to work or home.

Emergency Arrangements

Should someone fail to report their safe return, the nominated contact should take into account possible delay factors, such as heavy snow or rush hour traffic, before alerting a Senior Officer. If possible, contact should be made by mobile telephone during this time. If the member of staff still does not make contact within, say, one hour, the following action must be initiated by the nominated contact:

- Attempt to make contact with the person(s), or the person/location they were due to visit.
- Try to contact the person(s) at home to see if they have returned there. Do not alarm other family members, so only give few details at this stage.
- If at this stage no contact has been made, a Senior Officer will need to be informed.
- The Senior Officer will make the decision as to whether other family members should be informed at this stage.

- Contact the Police. Provide details of the itinerary identified at the information point. *If at any stage staff report their safe return the police should be informed immediately.*
- Arrange for a Senior Officer to take over liaison arrangements with the Police. This may be from the office or at home.
- If office cover is to be maintained for the purposes of emergency contact, staff should inform the County Hall attendants and home that they will remain at work to act as emergency contact.

Further Action - Reporting

Members of staff have a duty to report any injuries or dangerous occurrences as soon as practicable. Further information on the reporting procedure can be obtained from the Directorate Safety Coordinator, or the Health and Safety Team.

Management have a responsibility to take action to prevent similar incidents occurring again, if possible. An ACC1 (and if appropriate an ACC2) should be raised to precipitate and record requisite management action. This may mean making employees aware of potential incidents and providing information and training. Part of this training should include agreeing limits to what can and cannot be done in a "lone" worker situation. This should include how to contact the police if required.

General Points to Consider During the Lone Worker Risk Assessment

- Have members of staff left a list of contact numbers for relatives in case they need to telephone someone about the whereabouts of a member of lone working staff (possibly out of hours)?
- Does the workplace present a specific risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Has training for vulnerable staff been considered, such as the various violence at work courses run by the Personnel and Administration Directorate
- Have staff been advised to read Violence at Work Policy.
- Where members of staff have any doubts, have they checked out the person(s) they are to meet prior to any meeting taking place, particularly if they have concerns about those persons?
- Are there hazards related to travelling alone?

- Are there health and safety implications in lifting or using equipment alone?
- Are there any particular types of people more at risk?
- Has the employee got a medical condition that may make them unsuitable to work alone?
- If the member of staff is attending a meeting, could it take place at County Hall or other suitable location?
- Have members of staff considered the possibility of inclement weather and the suitability of footwear and clothing?
- Is the use of mobile telephones/pages/personal attack alarms necessary?
- Have staff arranged for a phone call to be made from the site to make people aware that their whereabouts are known to the office?
- Have staff been advised to be alert at all times and beware of changes in their surroundings and the need take extra care with people that they do not know?
- Is the vehicle used suitable/road worthy for the intended journey?
- Has the member of staff ensured that they park in a suitable location (this should be well lit during the hours of darkness)?

Arrangements within Each Directorate

All Heads of Service are responsible to ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to protect lone workers within their sphere of control.

The Health and Safety Team is available to provide further guidance and advice on any proposed procedures.

Prior to publication/implementation all proposed procedures must be discussed with the lead contact Health and Safety Officer via the appropriate Directorate/Divisional Safety Group. This step is necessary to verify that there is no variance with the legislation on which the policy is based.