



Health and Safety – Guidance Sheet GS2

Subject: Lone Working and Risk Assessment

Issue: 1

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Introduction

A risk assessment is an important step (and legal requirement) in protecting our employees. It helps us focus on the risks that really matter – the ones with the potential to cause harm. In many instances, straightforward measures can effectively control risks. This can mean that simple, cheap and effective measures to ensure our most valuable asset is protected.

The law does not expect us to eliminate all risk, but we are required to protect people as far as is 'reasonably practicable'.

This short guide will take you through a process of assessing the risk from lone working. It does not and cannot cover all possibilities, but it should enable you to apply your own knowledge and experience (together with that of your employees) to complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risk from lone working. Examples are given throughout, but these are only examples, you will need to consider your exact circumstances and apply the principles appropriately.

What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or need to do more to prevent harm.

How do you assess the risks from lone working?

Any risk assessment may be broken down into 5 steps:

1. Identify the hazards
2. Decide who might be harmed and how
3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions
4. Record your findings and implement them
5. Review your assessment and update if necessary.

The process should not be overcomplicated, the key is to ensure it is effective – remember a risk assessment is only a process to help you decide whether risks are adequately controlled or whether you need to do more. In all cases you should involve employees or their representatives, as they will have useful information about how the work is done.

1. Identify the hazards – a hazard is anything with the potential to cause harm. For lone working the significant hazards that will need to be considered will include:

Violence and aggression – may be greater risk due to employee being alone, is there any history of violence, does the work involve enforcement activities or other 'negative' actions, does the employee have to work in isolated areas, does the employee have to visit high crime areas, does the employee carry cash, equipment or other valuables, etc.?

Illness or injury – may be a risk of being unable to get assistance, is there any underlying medical condition, does the employee have to visit remote areas, is there a means of summoning assistance, is there a mobile phone signal, is there a history of previous accidents, etc.?

Vehicle breakdown – may be a risk of becoming stranded, do employees work in remote areas, do employees have to travel large distances, do employees carry passengers, do employees use their own car or Council vehicle, are vehicles maintained in accordance with manufacturers recommendations, do employees have to drive during inclement weather, etc.?

2. Decide who may be harmed and how? - Identification of employees at risk and how they may be harmed should be a simple process. You should already know which individuals or groups of employees are routinely required to work alone. However, you will also need to consider abnormal or unusual circumstances, for example, any emergency situation, out of hours call out, etc.

3. Evaluate your risks and decide on precautions – the level of risk employees are exposed to must be determined. This is not an exact science – rather a measure made on available information and past experience. There are various methods available to support you in this evaluation and remember to consult with employees or their representatives. The table below may be useful.

Severity Likelihood	SLIGHTLY HARMFUL	MODERATELY HARMFUL	EXTREMELY HARMFUL
HIGHLY UNLIKELY	LOW	LOW	MEDIUM
UNLIKELY	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
LIKELY	MEDIUM	HIGH	INTOLERABLE

The aim is to ensure that control measures are proportionate to the degree of risk. Where a risk is assessed as **INTOLERABLE** action must be taken immediately to reduce the risk or the work stopped.

Some example control measures for lone working

LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
Office diary of movements kept. Signing in / out sheets. Basic training and information for employees. Information available on clients past history, locations to be visited etc.	Mobile phones. Formal movements log with nominated persons to supervise and escalation procedures in place. Comprehensive training for employees. Panic alarms in offices – with procedures.	Avoid lone working. At least 2 employees with access to back-up support. Support of outside agencies.

4. Record your findings and implement them – the significant findings of your risk assessment must be recorded and brought to the attention of your employees. If further control measures are identified you will need to develop an action plan detailing how and when these will be implemented. An example assessment is given at the end of this guide.

Remember this is only an example and must not be used as a final assessment. You must consider your exact individual circumstances.

5. Review your assessment and update if necessary – the law requires you to review the assessment ‘periodically’ or if circumstances change. In practice you should review assessments at least annually, or following an incident, accident, change in working practices, new employees, etc.

Dynamic Assessments

In addition to the formal, recorded risk assessments you carry out, all lone working employees should be trained to enable them to complete dynamic assessments as they go about their work. Generally, employees will not be expected to complete forms for this, rather, they should be able to make an assessment ‘in their head’ as their work progresses and circumstances may change. For example, an employee may arrive at a client’s property where there is an aggressive dog. The presence of a dog may not have been included in the formal assessment. The employee must be confident and competent enough to assess the situation they find themselves in and be able to identify suitable control measures, in this example, perhaps ask for the dog to be secured in another area, or if necessary – leave the property and make alternative arrangements.

Further Guidance

The Council's Health and Safety Team is currently working with individual service areas to develop further guidance and local procedures for lone working. These will be made available as and when they are finalised.

Further advice and guidance may also be obtained by following the links below or from the Council's Health and Safety Team, tel. 01443 425546.

Council Policy HS22 – Lone Working

<http://rctinform/stellent/groups/Public/documents/Policy/034174.pdf>

Council Policy HS13 – Violence at Work

<http://rctinform/stellent/groups/Public/documents/Policy/034185.pdf>

Health and Safety Executive Guide INDG73 – Working Alone

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL

LOCATION: _____

NAME OF ASSESSOR: _____

DESIGNATION: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

AREA/ACTIVITY: Working alone in the community

DATE: _____

DATE FOR REVIEW: _____

ITEM	HAZARD	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED	CURRENT CONTROLS	RISK	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION
1	Violence and aggression	Employees	• Office diary kept of all visits • Procedures in place for reporting in/out (if not returning to office) with arrangements for escalation. • Staff have mobile phones • Employees trained in safe working procedures • Employees carry no significant valuables/money • Due to nature of work, confrontation unlikely	Low	• Where work may involve confrontation re-assess • Ensure staff have all relevant and available information before making visit.	Manager

EXAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT

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NAME OF ASSESSOR: _____

DESIGNATION: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

AREA/ACTIVITY: Working alone in the community

DATE: _____

DATE FOR REVIEW: _____

ITEM	HAZARD	WHO MIGHT BE HARMED	CURRENT CONTROLS	RISK	FURTHER ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR ACTION
2	Becoming ill or sustaining an injury	Employee	• Staff inform Manager of any underlying medical condition • Staff carry mobile phones • Office diary kept of movements with suitable procedures in place	Low	• Remind staff of need to report any changes to their medical status.	Manager