

Me, myself and I

Lone working can apply to anyone. Whether someone spends all day away from the business premises or they're only alone for half an hour each day to open or lock up, it's essential to consider the health and safety of any employee who works on their own or with little close supervision.

Lone working accident claims have been on the increase in the last year, resulting in many serious injuries and fatalities. One recent incident involved a mechanic who, whilst working alone at the weekend, was found by colleagues on the Monday morning having died underneath a car when the jack failed whilst changing a wheel.

Whilst we have noticed an increase, it is important to stress that a lot are avoidable with some simple risk management measures in place.

What are the risks?

Lone working carries risks, some of which may include:

- Lack of access to assistance in the event of emergency or accident
- Lack of supervision
- Exposure to assault
- Lack of communication
- A general lack of support.

Control measures should be in place and employers should ensure that someone always knows if employees are working outside of core hours or at weekends. Employers should also consider whether family members know work patterns for employees and who to contact if they are late. Additionally, everyone should understand the emergency procedures on site.

Why consider lone and mobile workers?

Employers, the self-employed and contractors are responsible for risk assessments and must take into

account both normal work related risks and also any additional health and safety factors presented for those who work on their own or with little or no close supervision - during the whole of the work period or just for short periods of time.

What key actions should be taken?

Lone and mobile working should be the subject of a recorded risk assessment in the same way as all other work-related activities. Those undertaking this require a thorough understanding of the work to be done, and consultation with workers and safety representatives is an essential element of the process.

The findings should be recorded and safe systems of work developed. Workers should be informed of the risks, and formally instructed and trained in the work and the operation of the risk control measures. Training records should be maintained and the employee's signed acknowledgement of such training recorded.

Lone workers should be made aware of their duties to cooperate and comply with the safety instructions and training they have been given, to take reasonable care of their own safety and that of others, and to report any matters requiring correction or review.

Working alone is not a risk in itself. However, if something happens which is out of the lone worker's control, such as a fall or medical emergency, there needs to be a plan in place to mitigate the danger that could arise from such a situation. Recognising that lone working exposes employees and others to certain hazards is an essential first step in protecting them.

For more information on how to protect lone and mobile workers can be found at the HSE website www.hse.gov.uk or on the Business Link website www.businesslink.gov.uk

Contact your local Allianz broker.



For remote workers, preparation and planning is key. A few simple questions need to be answered by employees and they should ensure they have prepared for the working day ahead. For example:

- What is my program for the day?
- Where will I be going?
- When do I have to be there?
- How long do I expect to be there?
- Which route will I take, do I have an alternative?
- Who else is aware of my plan?
- Wear appropriate clothing
- Carry sufficient money for daily needs
- Carry the means by which to contact others in an emergency, e.g. mobile phone, personal security alarm etc. Is the item charged?
- Avoid taking unnecessary risks
- Confirm appointments
- Am I comfortable in my surroundings? If in any doubts act upon instincts.
- If plans change, tell somebody.

Recognise that

- Local knowledge is a wonderful asset; so if they are in an unfamiliar area refer to a colleague for advice
- Confident people appear less vulnerable
- The unexpected will happen when people least expect it to. Anyone can pose a threat to security
- Security should be positioned as part of daily routine, not an inconvenience.

Do

- Take time to get to know local surroundings
- Discuss security with work colleagues
- Rehearse security procedures
- Always let someone know intentions
- Log call plan on electronic calendar accessible to colleagues
- Discuss security with spouse or partner
- Act upon instincts, avoid confrontation and take security seriously
- Report incidents
- Sign in and out at client's premises
- Report to responsible person on site.

Do not

- Get complacent
- Assume. Always check
- Get angry
- Take unnecessary risks
- Take short cuts to work activities
- Become a victim
- Ignore instincts
- Go to an appointment you are unhappy about.