

Alert No 08/2015

This safety alert has been prepared by the RSTA. Completed forms for adding to the RSTA website should be submitted to Clive Mitchell [clive@rsta-uk.org](mailto:clive@rsta-uk.org) For further information regarding this safety alert please email Clive or phone 07557529410

**Safety Alert**

**Lone Working**

**Description**

Following our Health and safety Forum, it became apparent that not all employees are aware of the protocols for lone working. You may be lone working if you:

* Work alone in a part of a site that is not occupied by other people
* Work alone outside of normal working hours
* Work alone in the office environment
* Work alone in areas that are remote
* Work alone whilst surveying

**Work Factors**

Work factors that must be taken into account when considering whether the risks of Lone Working are acceptable include:

* Does the place of work and the job to be carried out present more unacceptable risks to the health and safety of a Lone Worker than it would for a team of two workers?



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* Can the Lone Worker enter and exit from the place of work safely, including exiting quickly and safely in an emergency?
* Can all plant, equipment and substances used be safely handled by one person?
* Are there barriers to effective communication with the lone worker?
* If something goes wrong, is a prompt and effective rescue a realistic possibility?

There may be occasions when unplanned Lone Working takes place, for example, one person decides to separate from their workmates to have a look at another issue that may have arisen, and these situations have the potential to put the health and safety of the Lone Worker at significant risk.

**Person Factors**

All lone workers must be suitable for the task to be undertaken, and the following questions must be asked and satisfactorily answered:

* Considering both routine work and a possible emergency situation, does the person have medical condition that might make them unsuitable for lone working?
* Does the person require and possess a particular level of physical fitness to carry out the work?



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* Has the person who will carry out the job received adequate training and instruction to do it safely?
* Does the person have sufficient experience to be able to recognise an unsafe situation developing which requires leaving the place of work?
* Does the person know how to inform others, and who to inform if an unsafe situation develops?
* Is a female or non-English speaking worker at a greater level of risk?
* Young persons, vulnerable adults and expectant mothers shall not work alone

**Risks Factor**

A wide range of work activities can be classed as lone working, not all of which present unacceptable risks. For example, it could be argued that a Lone Worker travelling to work in a serviceable and suitable vehicle is at less risk than a Lone Worker entering an underground chamber after normal working hours.

The findings of a thorough risk assessment will determine whether it is safe to proceed or not.

An assessment of the risks arising from carrying out work which involves the following common construction activities might indicate that Lone Working is not acceptable:



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* Working at height.
* Working in a confined space or narrow, deep excavations, whether classified as a confined space or not
* Working with, or close to, exposed live electrical cables or fittings.
* Using any substance that could deplete the level of oxygen
* Any hot-works
* Disturbance of sludge in any underground chamber, etc.
* Entering ductwork
* Working over or near to water or other fluids in which a person could drown
* The operation of any equipment such as power saws
* The operation of petrol-driven equipment that emits fumes that could lead to asphyxiation.
* The operation of construction plant
* Where there is a threat or perceived threat of violence against the worker
* Working on or about a railway line.



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**Actions**

The health and safety of anyone who is working alone may require additional risk and preventive control measures, for example:

* Supplementing the WPP/RAMS with a Safe Work Permit system which clearly defines the limits of the work allowed and the time within which it must be completed.
* Providing the worker with a means of communication, e.g. a mobile phone
* Fitting tracking systems to vehicles
* Implementing a check in-system, whereby either;
* The Lone Worker contacts his/her Supervisor at pre-determined intervals, the frequency of which will depend on the nature of the task being undertaken and the remoteness of the location; or
* The Supervisor contacts the Lone Worker at pre-determined intervals to ensure that all is well
* In the event that no response is received from the first contact with the Lone Worker a second call shall be made within two minutes of the first.
* In the event of no response to the second call the next nearest work team or Supervisor should head to the lone workers work-site to establish the situation and report back with their findings.



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* Should the nearest teams/supervisor be deemed to be too far distant to be effective, then a request to the local Police office to attend should be made.
* In the event that no response is received from the first contact with the Supervisor, the Lone Worker shall contact their supervisor’s office and confirm that all is well with them (the lone worker) and to relay the message to the supervisor as soon as possible. This will prevent any confusion which may lead to implementing any emergency arrangements.

Your Line Manager is responsible for ensuring:

* Lone workers are provided with comprehensible and relevant information on any risks that exist in the workplace and any control measures that are in place to reduce those risks.
* Suitable Emergency Arrangements are in place
* Any individual who is likely to work alone is physically fit to undertake the work and sufficiently trained to carry out their duties.

Employees are responsible for:

* Informing their Manager of any situation or matter which they believe presents a risk to themselves or to others



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* Ensuring that they inform their Manager of any medical condition that may affect their ability to work alone safely
* Undertaking a Hazard Identification prior to starting work
* Telephoning their Line Manager at the end of their shift or at pre-determined intervals
  + Contacting Report It if they are unable to contact their Supervisor to complete your check-in, to avoid any undue confusion and unnecessary emergency arrangements.