

# GUIDANCE ON WORKING ALONE DURING CORONAVIRUS

We understand that the continued Government restrictions relating to Coronavirus have meant new ways of working and new ways to manage employees. To help during these challenging times, we've summarised the points you may wish to consider in order to help you and your employees to continue to work safely. However, as we have not been able to visit your premises, we're unable to make explicit recommendations.

Following the restrictions put in place by the Government to manage the spread of Coronavirus, many businesses have had to adapt their ways of working which has resulted in a rise in the number of people working alone. This could be because of reduced staffing due to illness or self-isolation, staff working from home, buildings no longer being occupied, or the need to furlough staff.

In order to make sure your lone workers are kept safe you need to assess the risks, so think about who will be on their own and what hazards could harm them.

Typical risks that particularly affect lone workers include:

- violence in the workplace
- stress and mental health or wellbeing
- a person's medical suitability to work alone
- the workplace itself, for example if it's in a rural or isolated area.

Whether working alone at work or when out and about undertaking deliveries etc., employers have a legal responsibility to ensure their staff are safe. In order to make sure your lone workers are kept safe you need to assess the risks and have appropriate controls in place.

## IDENTIFY WHO WILL BE WORKING ALONE

Make sure that the lone worker is medically fit to be working alone (physically and mentally).

Certain medical conditions preclude people from carrying out high risk tasks and could require an immediate medical response if they're affected by their condition. Mental health conditions will also need to be considered when deciding who is best to work alone.

If an employee has a medical condition but is permitted to conduct lone working, then make sure they carry any medications or devices they may need. Always seek medical advice if you're not sure how the condition is best managed at work.

You'll also need to consider:

- If there are any language or communication barriers that could affect being able to monitor and supervise the lone worker remotely
- Are they adequately trained in the work, equipment, area, emergency procedures?
- Do they know how to deal with any unexpected situations e.g. breakdowns?
- Are they competent enough to work without supervision and able to identify and deal with health and safety issues?



## **WHERE WILL THE LONE WORKER BE WORKING AND WHEN?**

You should document where your staff are lone working and at what times. You must provide regular remote supervision, education and training, and implement enough control measures to protect them. This could include lone worker alarms or checking over the phone / radio. If working at other sites / premises, ensure that they have all the information they need on local rules / information on hazards, including those related to Coronavirus, e.g. hygiene and social distancing measures.

Lone workers may be working in a remote location where there is limited phone signal, or where an alarm may not work or be heard. If this is the case, then you need to consider whether the emergency services could locate them quickly and easily if called – the What3Words app may help here.

There also needs to be access to hand washing facilities and toilets, or if this is not possible, then hand sanitisers and cleaning materials to follow Coronavirus hygiene practices, should be provided.

## **WHAT WORK WILL THE LONE WORKER NEED TO CARRY OUT?**

Certain high-risk work must never be carried out alone. This may include work in a confined space, live electrical work, chainsaw work or using certain hazardous substances (e.g. fumigation).

You must risk assess whether the work can be done safely by someone working alone, if it can then lone workers must be adequately trained and have all the required PPE and safety equipment. You'll also need to document any tasks that may not be done by individuals on their own and make sure that they're aware of these restrictions.

## **ARE LONE WORKERS AT AN INCREASED RISK OF VIOLENCE?**

Lone working means that there is no nearby support so it makes employees more vulnerable should violence occur. You need to think if this is likely or possible in the environment, they'll be working in. All employees who are likely to be exposed to violence should be trained in personal safety or violence prevention and what to do when they feel at risk.

## **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

There should be direct contact with the lone worker by phone / radio / email or lone worker alarm. Regular pre-agreed intervals of contact should be made to check on them to ensure they're safe, healthy and supported, it also gives them an outlet to report any incidents or concerns and to inform you when they've finished work / the task and are going home.

### **USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

The Health and Safety Executive website contains a lot of useful information on lone working, for further information visit [hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm](https://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm)

In addition to this, we also have guidance on a range of risk management matters on the NFU Mutual website. For further information visit [nfumutual.co.uk/RMS](https://www.nfumutual.co.uk/RMS)

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Governmental guidance relating to the Coronavirus pandemic is updated frequently and different approaches may be taken in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland which may impact on the accuracy and validity of this guidance. We therefore do not give any warranty, whether express or implied, as to the accuracy and validity of this guidance. You are solely responsible for keeping up to date with developments relating to the Coronavirus pandemic. To keep up to date, please read the information that your Government is sharing with the public which can be found at [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk), [www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales) (for Wales), [www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot) (for Scotland) and [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk) (for Northern Ireland) and consult the NHS website for health advice.

This guidance is provided on the strict understanding that you accept, without limitation, that you retain sole responsibility for compliance with health and safety legislation and regulations, all other legislation and any warranties/conditions attached to your insurance policies. We have not conducted any site visits as part of producing this guidance and we have not, and are not, providing any guidance in relation to your specific set up.

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