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**A lone worker performs a job without close or immediate supervision. Such workers are exposed to risk as there is no one to support them on site. The United Kingdom has approximately 6 million lone workers amongst various industries, with significant numbers in the construction sector.**

**Major lone workers risks include slips, falls, physical abuse, chemical abuse, stress, height fall, lighting strike or accident.**

# Lone workers SOS solutions

The law requires employers to establish any health and safety risks for people working alone. Employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of all their workers, any contractors and self-employed working for them, including lone workers. Employers need to comply with their legal duties towards lone workers under:

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Secretary of State Directions
- Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977(a) and
- The Health and Safety (Consultation with Employees) Regulations 1996(b)
- The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regs. 1995 (RIDDOR)\
- The Corporate Manslaughter and Homicide Act 2007

Workers have responsibilities to take reasonable care and to co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

Lone workers can take care of their safety by ensuring:

- they carry a mobile phone device all the time
- let their supervisor know about the place of work and what time it will finish
- beware of risks of the work location
- be up to date with health and safety training
- master use of safety monitoring system and how to send the immediate SOS alerts

### How must employers ensure workers safety?

Employers must do risk assessments of every job to consider the possible risks and measures to remove or control them. Such risk assessment can help to decide about the level of supervision. They have to provide instruction, supervision and training. The example of the high-risk job is working near exposed live electricity conductors or fumigation work. Results of the risk assessment should be kept in project's records. It is obligatory for employers to consult all their workers on health and safety issues to identify possible hazards and controls.

The assessment of the risks should identify foreseeable events. Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in them. Information regarding emergency procedures should be given to lone workers. The risk assessment may indicate that mobile workers should carry first-aid kits and/or that lone workers need first-aid training. They should also have access to adequate first-aid facilities.

The provision of adequate and sufficient control measures including fact-based Risk Assessment, Safe Working Practices and Reporting Procedures, Lone Worker Protection Equipment/Systems and regularly managed and monitored



health and safety training, will not only help protect Lone Workers from serious or fatal injury, but also help to protect the organisation from the risk of expensive litigation, unlimited fines and potentially catastrophic damage to reputation, brand and shareholder values.

Tips how to identify hazards for lone workers:

- Does the workplace present a specific risk to the lone worker, for example, due to temporary access equipment, such as portable ladders or trestles that one person would have difficulty handling?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person, e.g., for a lone person working out of hours where the workplace could be locked up?
- Is there machinery involved in the work that one person cannot operate safely?

- Are chemicals or hazardous substances being used that may pose a particular
- risk to the lone worker?
- Is there a risk of violence and aggression?
- Are there any reasons why the individual might be more vulnerable than others and be particularly at risk if they work alone (for example if they are young,
- If the person has the medical condition are they able to execute the work alone?
- What are the best methods of lone worker supervision, monitoring and emergency help?

The level of supervision depends on how risky is the job and how well trained is the employee to work on his own. Procedures must be put in place to monitor lone workers and effective means of communication are essential. These may include:

- supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone;
- pre-agreed intervals of regular contact between the lone worker and supervisor,
- using phones, radios or email, bearing in mind the worker's understanding of English;
- manually operated or automatic warning devices which trigger signal alarms;
- specific signals received periodically from the lone worker;
- implementing robust system to ensure a lone worker has returned to their base or home once their task is completed

In the case of emergency, the most important are to communicate, locate and respond even in poor signal areas. Morrison Utility Service (MUS) has launched an app to improve the protection for workers working on their own. The smart phone application provides new safety measures for the contractor's operatives working alone. It gives any MUS operative working without supervision or on their own the instant access to the alarm system to enable faster assistance in case

of the accident. The app uses GPS/GPRS location tracking technology which enables supervisors and alarm respondents to locate the worker quickly. Moreover, the accelerometer which is build into the majority of smartphones issued to MUS workers can recognise sudden changes in movement (such as falling) or non-movement what could mean injury or loss of consciousness. When the possible incident is detected the app triggers an automatic SMS alert to the MUS incident line team which operates 24h per day plus to up to four designated mobile contact numbers. The emergency message can be set in advance, and the emergency alarm can be triggered by:

- panic button activated by the lone worker
- app sensors activate the alarm in case of no movement of the device over a set time- each new movement resets the countdown timer
- the app detects freefall followed by a sudden landing (sensitivity settings can be adjusted)
- if set time session is exceeded

The false alarms can be prevented by no reaction to an initial alarm, which can be cancelled within 45 seconds.

Moreover, there are systems available that sound an alarm if an unauthorised worker is about to enter a high-risk area to stop them going any further; or it can be used to alert the lone worker that they are entering such an area and need to adhere to Health & Safety rules. Other lone workers monitoring solutions include lone worker transmitters, high-risk security bracelet, asset tracking tags, temperature sensors or wireless emergency call protection system.

With the increased focus on safety and the increasing penalties now faced for breaching safety legislation, lone worker protection has become a prime focus. The employer will be liable to pay fines in cases of lone workers accidents, so it is worthy to understand all Health and Safety rules and measures. Accidents and medical emergencies do happen so it is important to be prepared. For more information on health and safety of lone workers visit [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)