



LONE WORKING

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

Name of Policy:	Lone Working
Purpose of the Policy:	To provide Health and Safety guidance for lone workers.
Policy Applies to:	All employees, students and contractors who are likely to work alone regularly
Approved by:	Health & Safety Committee
Responsible for its Updating:	Head of Health & Safety
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Staffordshire University's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender neutral language, jargon free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This policy is available in alternative formats on request.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. It is inevitable that at certain times staff, students and others will find themselves working alone. These occasions can occur, for example, at the beginning and end of flexible working periods, during holidays, during the night and at weekends. There is no overall legal prohibition on working alone, but the general duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, and the specific duties of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 still apply.
- 1.2. These duties require the identification of the hazards in the work, formal assessment of any significant risks involved, and devising and implementing safe working arrangements to ensure that the risks are either eliminated or adequately controlled.
- 1.3. Many staff and students work alone at some time during their working periods at the University and in the majority of cases they do so without significant risk. For example, persons working alone in offices carrying out typical office activities outside normal working hours are unlikely to be at significant risk, provided appropriate fire precautions and communications are in place. However, there are occasions when it is not possible to devise arrangements for work to be done safely by one person. In these cases, alternative arrangements involving help or back-up have to be put into place.
- 1.4. This document lays down guidelines to assess which tasks may be undertaken by a lone worker and which may not.

2.0 Definitions

2.1. Lone Worker

Persons are to be considered working alone if they have neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon assistance in the event of an accident or illness.

2.2. Normal Working Hours

8.00am to 6.00pm on Monday to Thursday and 8.00am-5.30pm on Friday except public and fixed holidays.

2.3. Lone working is undertaken by a range of University employees and students either by virtue of their working hours, remote location or methods of working. Some common examples include:

- Library staff;
- Campus and Grounds staff;
- Cleaners;
- Estates Maintenance staff;
- Individuals who work on their own in a laboratory or workshop;
- Members of staff or students undergoing fieldwork within the UK or abroad;
- Staff or students undertaking research based in the community;
- Students undertaking practical or experimental work as part of their academic programme;
- Members of staff working from home;
- Members of staff travelling alone on University business.

3.0 Responsibilities

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the University as an employer has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees. There is also contained in the legislation a general duty of care to protect students and members of the public. These requirements are applicable to all work situations, including where staff (and others) are working alone or outside normal working hours.

3.1. Dean of School/Director of Service Responsibilities

The Dean of School/Director of Service is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place to eliminate the risk from lone working where possible and effectively manage lone working in their areas of responsibility and that these arrangements are communicated to all staff, students and visitor via a local rules document.

3.2. Line Manager or Supervisor Responsibilities

The Dean of School/Director of Service meets their responsibility by delegating to line managers or supervisors who have the responsibility to ensure that:

- All lone working activities are formally identified and appropriate risk assessments undertaken, which identify the risk to lone workers and the control measures necessary to minimise those risks, as far as reasonably practicable.
- Arrangements for lone working are communicated effectively and the details of what can or cannot be done while working alone is explicit.
- The lone worker is made aware of the hazards and understands all the necessary control measures that need to be put in place.
- Reasonable enquiries are made to ensure that the lone worker is medically fit to undertake the work alone.
- Adequate supervision, instruction and training are in place and that the lone worker is competent. The extent of the supervision is a management decision, which should be established through the risk assessment process. It should not be left to individual members of staff or students to decide if they require assistance/supervision.
- Monitoring of lone working practices is in place to ensure that control measures identified in the lone working risk assessment are being adhered to.

3.3. Employee Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to take care of their own safety and to co-operate with University procedures. Employees should not knowingly place themselves in situations which expose them to additional risk by working alone. If a person finds that they are placed in a situation which may be considered to be that of a 'lone worker', then they should ensure that their line manager or Supervisor is made aware of the circumstances at the earliest opportunity and then assist in the process of identifying the steps needed to either prevent the lone worker situation from arising, or, if this is not possible, assist in developing the precautions necessary to ensure their own safety.

Lone workers have a responsibility to inform their line manager if they have any concerns over the effectiveness and efficiency of the agreed arrangements and also if there are any reasons why they would not be able to work alone or to continue to work alone in safety.

3.4. Student Responsibilities

Students also have responsibilities to comply with health and safety instructions, including the University's rules and regulations for students, and

not to misuse or damage equipment provided. They may be held responsible for the consequences should they neglect to carry out a task required for the health or safety of others. Therefore students must follow any local rules with regard to lone working on University premises or during their study or research.

4.0 Prohibitions on Lone Working

Lone working must not be undertaken where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the work might result in an accident which would be sufficiently serious to require a second person to be available to summon help.

Those tasks which are deemed unacceptable to be performed by a lone worker under any circumstances must be documented in the written record of risk assessments kept by Schools and Services.

5.0 Situations Where Lone Working is Prohibited by Law

The following examples specify systems of work which require more than one person:

5.1. Entry into confined spaces

Confined spaces include tanks, manholes, pipes, flues, ducts, ceiling voids, enclosed basement rooms, dark rooms, cold rooms, and other spaces where there may be inadequate natural/mechanical ventilation.

5.2. Ladders

Use of ladders which cannot be secured and require 'footing' by a second person.

5.3. Scaffolding

Erection of scaffolding.

5.4. Machinery

Use of dangerous machinery where there is a risk of entanglement, crushing, impact, or injury from cutting or shearing, stabbing or puncture (e.g. woodworking machinery, abrasive wheels, some food preparation equipment, plastics processing machinery, etc.).

6.0 Safe Working Arrangements for Lone Workers

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff or students. The obvious question that has to be asked is whether the risks of the work can be adequately controlled by one person, or are more people necessary?

- Lone workers should not be exposed to **significantly** higher risks than others who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. All situations where staff and students may be working alone should be identified and the following questions asked.

Will situations which are legally prohibited arise? Does the workplace represent a special risk to the lone worker?

- For example, it is not generally reasonable for staff or students to work alone in workshops because there is usually dangerous machinery about. (Fatal accidents have occurred following entanglement on centre lathes which may have been prevented had there been another person available to switch off the machine and help the trapped person.) However, if just low risk work such as assembly or some cleaning were being planned, then provided other risks were minimised and a system of checking or line of communication established, then it would be reasonable for a person to work alone.

Is there safe access and exit for that person?

- In the evenings and at weekends, many doors which provide an exit from buildings during normal working hours are locked for security reasons. Sufficient means of escape required during normal working hours must be available wherever a person works in the building outside normal working hours. However, the mechanism for opening doors on exit routes may be different outside normal working hours. The lone worker must have been made aware that aspects of his/her route out of the building in an emergency may be different.

Can one person safely handle all the plant and equipment needed?

- It may be heavy, awkward, unstable, large, etc. More than one person may be necessary to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.

Can all substances and materials involved in the work be handled safely by one person?

- Hazardous substances, e.g. substances which are subject to COSHH Regulations, flammable, cryogenic and radioactive materials, must be considered carefully. These are substances that have, for example, the potential to cause severe acute injury, either alone or as a component of a reaction, to cause burns, or to affect the respiratory, cardiovascular, or central nervous system. The term 'handling' in this context refers to a manipulative procedure or the supervision of a chemical reaction that has not reached a stable state. It would not normally include moving a closed container from one point to another, or being in the same rooms as a chemical reaction which was safe and stable.

7.0 Medical Fitness

Existing medical conditions should be considered when conducting any assessment for both routine work and foreseeable emergencies. Emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

8.0 Training

Risk assessments should help to determine the level of training needed for each type of work. A record of all training received must be kept.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore, need to understand fully the risks involved in the work and the necessary precautions, and be sufficiently experienced. Departments should, therefore, establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone, and, where appropriate, when to stop the work and seek advice.

9.0 Supervision

Although a risk assessment may indicate that a lone worker may not need continual accompaniment, the extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work to identify and handle safety issues. Persons new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job which presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first.

Young persons, under 18 years of age, will generally not work alone in the University.

The extent of supervision required is a management decision; it should not be left to individuals to decide if they require assistance.

10.0 Illness, Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established and the persons given clear and concise training and instructions on how to implement them. Similar information should be given to contractors or service engineers who may be working alone.

11.0 Communications

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period. In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

- Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers.
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone worker and a member of supervisory staff or the Campus Control Room is maintained using a telephone for out of hours working.