MAGB HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT GROUP

LONE WORKING

SCOPE: *This document represents best practice advice available and considered pertinent after consultation within the membership. It is intended to assist member companies to identify the hazards involved in working alone and offers guidance on measures that can be taken to prevent accidents/incidents from occurring.*

What is 'lone working'?

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.

They are:
- People in fixed establishments where only one person works on the premises, e.g. In a Plant, warehouse or office block.
- People who work separately from others in a Plant, warehouses, or office.
- People who work outside normal hours as cleaners, security, night shift workers and maintenance staff.
- People who work away from their home base on business on project work.
- Drivers working on behalf of the company.

Legal duties and responsibilities around lone working

- There is no legal requirement indicating that lone working must not happen. However, a great deal depends upon the risk assessment which should be undertaken as part of broad duties under The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).
- These regulations require identifying the hazards found at work, assessing the risks arising from these hazards, and then putting measures in place to control the risks.

Assessing and controlling the risks of lone working

- A risk assessment should indicate any significant risk, and detail how the risks should be adequately controlled for lone working to continue.
- Control measures may include training, instruction, communications, supervision and PPE or indeed exclusion of activities.
- If a Risk Assessment shows it is unsafe to work alone, then arrangements should be in place for providing help or backup.

Safe arrangements for lone workers

Safe working arrangements for lone workers are no different to organising the safety of other employees:
- It must be identified if the lone worker can adequately control the risks of the job

- Precautions must be in place for both normal work and for emergencies such as fire, equipment failure or sudden illness.

Other considerations:
- Does the lone worker have a safe way in, out and around of the workplace?
- Can one person handle temporary access equipment, plant, goods or substances?
- Is there a risk of intruders onto site?

Medical suitability of lone workers

Check that lone workers have no medical condition that would make them unsuitable for working alone, seeking medical advice if necessary.

Training for lone workers

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision:
- Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced to fully understand the risks and precautions required.
- Employers should set limits of what may and may not be done whilst working alone
- Lone workers should be competent to deal with unusual or new circumstances beyond their training, and know when to stop and seek advice.

Supervision of lone workers

The extent of supervision depends on the risk and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues.

- Employees new to a job may need to be accompanied until competencies are achieved. Supervisors may periodically visit to observe the work being done.
- There should be the ability to be in regular contact by radio, telephone or mobile phone.
- There are a number of devices that provide automatic warnings should specific signals or movements not be received at a base station.

Emergencies and lone working

- Emergency procedures should be in place with the worker trained to respond.
- Lone workers should have access to a First Aid Kit or facilities should they need minor first aid and should be provided with advice on how to request further first aid assistance.
- A risk assessment may indicate that the lone worker needs First Aid training under some circumstances.
- Be sure to test your emergency preparedness and response systems for Lone Workers and Man Down situations on a regular basis.