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## 1 INTRODUCTION.

### 1.1 Employees

Employee who work by themselves, either on a regular, permanent or occasional basis can be at greater risk from accidents than other workers. This overview aims to help IDBs identify areas where there may be shortcomings in their current arrangements and draw attention to areas of concern that may have inadvertently been overlooked.

### 1.2 Working Alone

Working alone is not illegal, but the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations still apply. These require the identification of hazards related to the work being carried out and clear assessment of the risks involved. Once this has been done, measures should be put in place to avoid or control the risks. With appropriate management and control of the risks those who work alone can be safe at work.

## 2 WHO IS A LONE WORKER?

### 2.1 Lone Workers

Lone workers are basically those people who work by themselves, without close or direct supervision. This situation can also occur in buildings, where one person works in an area separate from others, or works outside of normal hours, however in this case, we are looking at employees who spend most of their time working outside of their depots or a fixed base. This includes the majority of IDB operational workers.

### 2.2 Employees

Employees will usually appreciate when they are working alone, but there are times when this can be for both long and/or short periods. This can sometimes confuse the issue, but the employer should always have procedures in place that recognise lone workers and ensure that they can work safely.

## 3 RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS.

Please also refer to; Risk Assessment - A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

### 3.1 The Need to Assess the Risks

The requirement to assess the risks, is associated with any activity and therefore applies to employees that work alone. The risk assessment process should be undertaken by the employer who should understand the potential hazards that may be encountered when working alone. The employer must ensure that all hazards are identified, and measures are put into place to avoid or control the risks. An employer must use a competent person for health and safety advice.

- When controlling risks always ensure that best practice is used.

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- Control measures may also include instruction, training, supervision, or personal protective equipment. The employer should ensure that control measures are being used and review the risk assessment periodically to ensure that it is still relevant. **Risk assessments should always be reviewed following an accident, incident or near miss.**
- It is vital that employees are consulted on the risk assessment, as they will be a valuable source of information and advice. Where risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing assistance or back up should be put in place.
- Where a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace, it is the responsibility of that employer to inform the lone workers employer of any risks and control measures that should be taken. This will help the employer of the lone worker to properly assess the risks.
- Risk assessment will decide on the level of supervision required. There are some high-risk activities where at least one person may need to be present at all times.

## 3.2 Development of lone working procedures.

- It is the employers responsibility to identify employees who may work alone and develop a procedure for lone working which covers the problems and situations, which lone workers might encounter during their work.
- Answering the questions below (3.3 – 3.9) covers some of the issues, which need special attention when planning safe working arrangements.

## 3.3 Risk

- Can the risks be adequately controlled by one person? Lone workers should not be at more risk than other employees. This may require extra risk control measures. Any precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. The employer should identify situations where people work alone and consider the following:

## 3.4 Environment (Internal and External)

- Can one person carry out emergency procedures?
- Does the workplace present a special risk to lone workers?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Are automatic fire alarms fitted?

## 3.5 Personal Safety.

- Is there a risk of violence? Are the areas safe to work in alone? Is there any history of incidents involving landowners or public disorder?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?

## 3.6 Equipment.

- Can any temporary access equipment, for example ladders be safely handled by one person?
- Can all of the plant, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person? Consider if the work involves lifting objects too large for one person, or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.
- Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? Check that lone workers do not have medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone (seek occupational medical advice if necessary). Consider both normal and foreseeable emergencies, which may affect individual employees.

## 3.7 What training is required?

- Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help, in situations that may be beyond the experience of employees. Training will be critical in avoiding panic reactions in unusual or emergency situations. It is important that lone workers are trained in how to assess situations that are likely to escalate beyond their control and how to control the situation until it is resolved or assistance arrives. Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and able to understand the risks and precautions fully. Employers should set the limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone. They should ensure that employees are competent to deal with circumstances, which are new, unusual, or beyond the scope of training, such as when to stop work and seek advice from a supervisor, and how to handle violence and aggression.

## 3.8 How will the person be supervised?

- Lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, but it is still necessary to provide a level of supervision necessary for the lone worker to work safely. The extent of the supervision required will depend on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify and handle these risks. Lone workers that are new to a job, undergoing training or carrying out tasks where risks are deemed high, may need to be accompanied at first. The level of supervision required is a decision for the employer and should be based on the findings of a risk assessment, the higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should never be left to individuals to decide whether they require assistance.

## 3.9 How will employees be monitored?

Procedures will need to be put into place that monitor lone workers in a suitable manner to ensure their safety.

These may include:

- Supervisors/foremen periodically visiting and observing people working alone to ensure that procedures are being followed and that protective equipment is being used as required.
- Confirmation of diary visits, method of booking in and out including time of return.
- Regular contact between lone worker and supervisor using either mobile phone or radio.

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- Automatic warning devices, which operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker.
- Other devices designed to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency and which are operated manually or automatically by the absence of activity.
- Checks that the lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.
- It is important that if a warning is received or lone workers do not report on schedule that there is a procedure in place to locate and provide help to the lone worker if that is necessary.
- It is essential to cover out of hours working in any of these arrangements.

## 4 WHAT HAPPENS IN AN EMERGENCY?

The challenge for IDBs is being able to demonstrate that emergency plans are suitable, sufficient and actually work. There should be clear evidence that emergency plans have been tested and any shortfalls have been addressed.

- Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies.
- Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events.
- Emergency procedures should be established and employees trained in how to follow them.
- Information about emergency procedures and danger areas should be given to lone workers who visit premises you control.
- Lone workers should have access to adequate first aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first aid kit for treating minor injuries.
- Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need to be trained in basic first aid, it is generally recommended that all lone workers should be trained in basic first aid.

## 5 CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS;

Your current arrangements should be strong enough to stand up to external scrutiny. Failure to address the requirements of staff that work alone may lead to prosecution.

It is strongly recommended that due to the physical nature of IDB work and the use of potentially dangerous machinery that health Surveillance is also a major consideration.

### 5.1 Health Surveillance

- Pre – employment screening (medicals) and assessment of fitness and suitability for lone working;
- Health surveillance (Drug and Alcohol testing)

## 6 GENERAL

- Arrangements in place to protect lone workers in the event of fire, accident, illness or assault/violence and to respond to any distress call or failure to communicate when expected;
- Mobile phones, person down alarms provided; planned contact arrangements are in place; tested at regular intervals; work carried out is not allowed to change without proper assessment of new hazard;

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- Accidents/dangerous occurrences and near misses are reported, recorded, investigated and monitored;
- Employees aware of policies, procedures, tasks that may or may not be carried out alone, communication arrangements and risk involved;
- Adequate training and refresher arranged in hazards and emergency procedures;
- Adequate monitoring/supervision;
- Regular meetings between the employer and lone workers held to discuss work issues. e.g. work practices, concerns and feedback.

## 6.1 Unsocial Working Hours

- Working hours, site visits and meetings agreed by supervisors;
- Regular contact agreed and maintained;
- Signing off procedure agreed and followed

## 6.2 Workplace;

Lone workers probably do not have a fixed workplace, so what provision have you made for employees to go to the toilet when they are working in an isolated area?

You should also consider the following;

- Provision of adequate welfare facilities;
- Access/egress
- Adequate physical workplace layout;
- Adequate environmental conditions (temperature, ventilation, lighting etc);
- Arrangements in place for food and drink and adequate welfare facilities;
- Advise employees of activities when safe access and egress cannot be gained by a person working on their own e.g. use of ladders, working in or near water, entering confined spaces, provide safe equipment, ensure employees work in pairs, adequate training must be given.
- Advice given to employees on personal safety, dealing with aggression

## 6.3 Use of Hazardous Substances

- Ensure lone workers know hazards and precautions, emergency procedures;
- Employees trained in use of PPE, know how to report any defects on the equipment;
- Access to suitable and sufficient first aid facilities;
- Ensure that working practices are reviewed and revised assessments made, where necessary

## 6.4 Manual Handling ·

- Employees advised of tasks that they should not carry out on their own;

## 6.5 Age and Ability

- Individual factors relating to employees (lack of competence and experience, physical/mental ability, age)
- Adequate supervision/mentoring in place for young and inexperienced employees;
- Persons under 18 working with dangerous machines adequately supervised from a person who has a thorough knowledge and experience of the machines
- Health surveillance - regular health check arranged

## 7 FURTHER ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE.

This guidance has been compiled with information contained in HSE documentation referenced below.

The Health and Safety Toolbox – How to control risks at work - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/priced/hsg268.pdf>

Lone Working – Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

Consulting Employees on Health and Safety - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg232.pdf>

Working with substances hazardous to health A brief guide to COSHH - <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg136.pdf>

## 8 LONE WORKING – GAMEKEEPER FOUND DEAD FOLLOWING ACCIDENT ON AN ATV<sup>1</sup>

### 8.1 Summary and Action

The trustees of a Borders country estate have been fined £3,000 after admitting a health and safety breach in connection with a gamekeeper's death.

The 53-year old, who was employed as a temporary stand-in gamekeeper, sustained serious injuries to his pelvis when the quad bike he was driving overturned on a slope. However, his absence was not detected until 52 hours later, at which point a search was initiated. His body was found some 200 yards away from the scene of the accident, in a separate field.

He had no means of raising the alarm although there was a mobile phone signal and the normal gamekeeper (who was undergoing surgery) had been issued with a phone.

It appears the injured gamekeeper had attempted to reach a nearby farmhouse to seek help and had opened a farm gate in order to get there. The trustees were prosecuted because the injured gamekeeper clearly did not die immediately and if he had a means of communication then he would have had an opportunity to summon help.

The accident occurred in October 2004, but the case had been to the Court of Appeal on a point of law relating to the prosecution of a Trust and the case was not heard in court until March of this year. It was also the first time an agricultural concern had been prosecuted in respect of lone working.

The trustees admitted failing to provide a means of communication or carrying out a risk assessment for a lone worker to report in at the end of a shift.

### 8.2 Advice

Health and Safety Executive investigating officer Lawrence Murray said the decision sent out an important message. “Hopefully other employers will learn from this case and ensure all precautions are taken to cope with the hazards that lone workers are exposed to” he said. “They need a system in place for lone workers keeping in touch with people and also a means of communication to contact the emergency services if need be.”

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/experience/lone-working-gamekeeper.htm>