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## Lone Working Policy HSPG 24

Version 4  
April 2017



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## **Policy on Lone Working**

### **1.0 Statement of Policy**

- 1.1 As an employer St Mary's University is responsible for ensuring so far as is reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of its employees and other people who may be affected by its activities. Whilst working alone is not the subject of any general prohibition in health & safety legislation, the University's responsibility remains the same and in the absence of any specific legislation or predefined statements every situation should be assessed through risk assessment. There are no specific legal duties on employers in relation to lone working; however the general duty of employers to maintain safe working arrangements under the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act etc applies.
- 1.2 In addition, employees have duties to take reasonable care for their own health and safety, and for that of anyone else that may be affected by their actions.

### **2.0 Restrictions on Working Alone**

In general, there are no specific prohibitions regarding working alone, but there is a legal requirement to have more than one worker for certain activities which are judged too dangerous for one person e.g.:

- Construction (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1996, (as amended 2015). Working on a ladder which requires footing; and certain work which requires immediate supervision of a competent person, such as dismantling scaffolding
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) 2002 (as amended 2013). Certain fumigation work and other work with substances hazardous to health
- Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Road Regulations 1996 (as amended 2009). Unloading of petroleum spirit at petrol filling stations and certain other premises
- Diving at Work Regulations 1997. Supervision of diving operations
- Electricity at Work Regulations 1989. Work at, or near, a live electrical conductor
- Confined Spaces Regulations 1997 (as amended 2009) Entry into a confined space, for example, sewers or tanks
- Road Traffic (Carriage of Explosives) Regulations 1989. Supervision of vehicles conveying certain explosives.

### 3.0 Hazards Encountered by Lone Workers

The hazards faced by lone workers are not unique to this category of worker but their potential severity is increased by the absence of co-workers or supervisors. Potential hazards include:

- violence and robbery
- abusive customers
- extreme weather
- back injury due to heavy or awkward lifting
- electric shock
- smoke, gases and other inhalation hazards
- falls
- burns
- chemical over exposure
- explosion
- animal bites
- biohazards
- falling asleep at the wheel of a vehicle
- traffic hazards.

Table 1: Common hazards and some of their control measures

Potential hazard	Control measure(s)
Manual handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lone workers must be able to seek assistance from others, as required</li> <li>• provision of lifting and handling aids</li> </ul>
Violence against the person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• training in diffusing confrontation, negotiation etc</li> <li>• reducing the need for cash handling</li> <li>• varying driving routes for vehicles carrying cash</li> <li>• provision of personal alarms and effective means of two-way communication</li> <li>• panic buttons in confidential interview rooms</li> <li>• PPE e.g., stab-proof vests (where relevant)</li> </ul>
Breaking down in a vehicle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of reliable and well maintained vehicles</li> <li>• membership of a road-side rescue organization/service</li> </ul>
Fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fire precautions must be sufficient for the job</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

All lone workers should be aware of the relevant health and safety procedures, and should know what to do in the case of an emergency. In addition, procedures should be in place to avoid unnecessary risks.

Examples of easy-to-implement measures are:

- carry an alarm at all times, and keep it handy
- do not carry valuables unless necessary; carry a £10 note to satisfy muggers
- ensure someone knows where you are
- ensure you park in a well illuminated place / areas, preferably in a public place
- if you alter your plans, ensure someone is told
- prior to meeting a client, check him/her out – for example, are they who they claim to be?

#### **4.0 Lone Working examples at the University**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as ‘those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. There is no set duration that establishes someone as a lone worker; a person can be a lone worker for any period of time. Working alone does not necessarily mean an individual is the only employee on the premises; for example, it may include a situation where an individual works at an isolated worksite within a large, well-populated office building. However, this category would not apply when someone was working alone in a room but colleagues were in a room(s) nearby. In our business we have identified the following lone working situations:

- (i) A member of staff who spends considerable amounts of time in an office or study where he/she are usually the only occupant;
- (ii) A member of staff who works alone at out-of-hours times’, i.e. after 19.00hrs and before 07.00hrs weekdays and at weekends or on public holidays;
- (iii) A member of staff (including Teaching, Research and Learning Support staff) working alone in a high risk area i.e.; laboratories, or other high risk activities at the University at a weekend or after evening classes;
- (iv) A member of the Housekeeping staff working in an isolated building or area and not within easy reach of colleagues;
- (v) A member of Maintenance staff working in a ‘non-working’ space (e.g. roof space, plant room, lift equipment room) both within normal working hours and out-of-hours;
- (vii) An Accommodation Services member of staff visiting a landlord’s premises;

- (vii) A member of staff working away from their fixed base;

## **5.0 School/Service Managers must**

- a) Ensure that Risk Assessments have been carried out on the situations/projects or work activities in question;
- b) Ensure all appropriate control measures are put into place to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of those working alone.

In particular:

- c) Consider if the risks of the job can be adequately controlled by one person;
- d) Decide if any training is required to enable the lone worker to work safely;
- e) Make certain that the person is medically fit and suitable to work alone, or in the case of disability consider what adjustments and adaptations might be necessary;
- f) Decide how the person will be supervised if working alone e.g. arrangement put in place such as communication systems and devices and records of the whereabouts of lone workers;
- g) Put in place procedures to cover a situation where the lone worker becomes ill, has an accident, has to cope with an emergency e.g. personal alarms or drop alert devices;
- h) Put in place procedures to cover a situation where the lone worker has to deal with an intruder e.g. consider panic alarms or security arrangements;
- i) Consider what aids and technology might reduce the risks e.g. tracking devices or alarms etc;
- j) Provide any necessary equipment and safety information appropriate to the situation;

## **6.0 All employees must remember**

- 6.1 You have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to look after your own health, safety and welfare;
- 6.2 You must not take short cuts in a work task or disregard any instructions you have received relating to health and safety;

- 6.3 Any piece of work equipment can be a hazard. A filing cabinet drawer left open can be as damaging as a piece of unguarded machinery;
- 6.4 If you are using hazardous substances, find out from a COSHH assessment, the container or a product safety data sheet what precautions you must take and what Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) you must wear;
- 6.5 If you are working alone always ensure that the area where you are is secure against intruders. But also make sure you know how to exit in an emergency. Always let the Security Lodge know you are working alone, where you will be working and when you expect to finish, and they will ensure that a member of Security staff is informed. Always ensure that the Security Staff know when you are about to leave;
- 6.6 If you regularly work alone notify your line manager leaving a contact telephone number;
- 6.7 If you do have an accident whilst working alone or out-of-hours always seek assistance immediately from a First Aider. Remember that although an accident may not seem serious at the moment it occurs; delayed-action shock can worsen your condition, or cause further complications, very quickly.
- 6.8 Leave your transport as near to your work area as possible and try to use an open and well-used route to and from your transport.

If you are interviewing a student alone:

- arrange appointments to ensure that you are not alone in a building, if you are alone ensure that help can be summoned if required;
- try to use rooms with telephones or have a mobile phone available;
- avoid a small room, where open doors are a problem because of confidentiality choose a room with a vision panel or glass door;
- adopt a formal approach, e.g. have a table which forms a barrier;
- if you think the person may be 'difficult' ensure a third party is present;
- ensure someone knows where you are, whom you are with and how long you will likely to be;
- agree a record of the meeting.

6.9 Staff are instructed that they must immediately leave any situation in which they feel uncomfortable or at risk and that such action has the support of management.

## 7.0 Further Information and References

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE) - [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk). The HSE has a dedicated page on its website that covers work-related violence as the issue relates to the lone worker <http://www.hse.gov.uk/violence/loneworkers.htm>
- Suzy Lamplugh Trust - [www.suzylamplugh.org/index.asp](http://www.suzylamplugh.org/index.asp)
- Trades Union Congress (TUC) - [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)

Document title	Lone Working Policy
Version	4
Person responsible	Estates/ Facilities/ HSO
Author	Terry Docherty
Document date	October 2009
Last amended	October 2011, August 2016, April 2017
Effective from	October 2009
Review date	Aug 2019
Impact Assessment date	TBC
History (where discussed / who circulated to / committees considered)	HSC/ Jennifer Marvin / Dinah Asante

