Lone Worker
Assessing risks and finding solutions

FREE advice document for employers

- What to consider when reviewing your Lone Worker protection
- The law and employer's responsibilities
- In-house and accredited IT solutions

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Assessing risks and finding solutions

This document describes the legal requirements for protecting your employees from risks while they are working in isolated or potentially vulnerable situations. The aim is to make you aware of how to assess your current level of assurance and what options there may be for improving protection.

What is lone working? – a definition

Lone working is defined as a person who works without immediate contact with colleagues while carrying out their role. Examples include healthcare workers and social workers, but the list is literally endless. It can be anyone who works without a colleague for support. Even if two people work together, it may still be appropriate to consider them as lone workers because they may become vulnerable together or isolated from each other. Lone working doesn't just apply to people working outside, it can also include people working inside, for example in a retail venue or workshop. Risk increases as the availability of others reduces especially at night when it becomes more difficult to attract help.

What is your responsibility to employees?

It is the employer's responsibility to risk assess the role being carried out so a judgement can be made about the level of protection required or systems that need to be in place to ensure the individual has help in the event of an incident. Legislation that covers lone working includes the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. It should be noted that 'employer responsibility' extends to contractors too, not just their permanent staff.

Employers must carry out a risk assessment for their employees and if more than five are employed, that risk assessment must be formerly undertaken and recorded. This should be backed up by a policy that forms the basis of the assessment.

When assessing risks to staff, employers should take account of individual considerations that may put one individual at more risk than another, for example, if someone has a medical condition or disability that may increases the risk.

Additional training may be required for lone workers, both in the use of lone worker systems and in perceiving risks for while at work. Employers should consider what provision should be made to monitor staff in the field. Does this form a component of your staff induction?

In considering risk to employees, an employer might consider:

- Providing the employee with a mobile phone
- Providing a dedicated lone worker monitoring system
- Risks around loss of cellular signal and how that can be managed
- How quickly help could get to the individual
- What level of experience the individual has that may determine their ability to manage a lone worker situation

Solutions need not be technical

Systems for lone worker protection can include buddy systems where there is communication between colleagues or perhaps a team leader back at base. These solutions can work but are often considered weak because there is an increased risk of the 'monitoring colleague' being caught up with distracting activities. It is for the employer to consider whether they can guarantee this type of monitoring will provide the level of assurance they are seeking to provide.

Systems like this depend on good communications and in the event of signal lost, there is a real possibility of no protection being available.

Modern smart phones have an option to invoke help through multiple presses of (usually) the power button. This can trigger a call, and send messages to defined individuals, often sending location information. However, this option is not the gold standard in lone worker monitoring and this is where specialised service providers start to take over.

There are accredited systems – BS8484

There is a standard that governs lone worker systems and suppliers. The accreditation is BS8484:2016. The standard describes the level of assurance suppliers in this market must provide. The standard includes the technology used and alert receiving centres (ARCs) that respond to incidents as well as the financial stability of the supplier.

BS8484 accredited suppliers must go through repeated rigorous assessments to ensure they meet the standards described in BS8484 and this ensures employers can have the maximum confidence in a technical solution that protects their staff.

There are many suppliers operating in this space and if an employer chooses to go down this route they can expect to pay up to £100 per year per employee for an all inclusive service.

Choosing the best supplier can be complicated and there are many aspects to be considered when selecting.

Considerations include…

- Supplier accreditation
- Supplier reputation and references
- TCO – Total Cost of Ownership
- Cellular coverage of lone worker devices
- Phone App or fob device? – each have merits
- How many do I need? How do I decide who needs protection?
- How do other similar organisation utilise this approach? What I can I learn?

If you need independent help in assessing your current position or looking at possible solutions, complete an enquiry form here

https://www.currian.com/lone-worker or email contact@currian.com.