



LEAFLET 26

LONE WORKING

AMENDMENT RECORD

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LONE WORKING

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Foreword

This leaflet is published under the authority of the Chairman of the Defence Occupational Health and Safety Board (OHSB). This leaflet is for application across all areas of MOD and the Armed Forces and reflects any recent changes in legislation and or MOD practises.

1. SCOPE

1.1 This Leaflet provides guidance to all staff and line management both Service and civilian on the health and safety issues related to staff working in isolation and or without supervision where there is a risk that is directly related to the activity being undertaken of ill health, injury or assault and the consequences aggravated by any delay in receiving treatment.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Resource limitations and efficiency drives along with advances in telecommunications and information technology (IT) has resulted in more activities potentially being carried out by Lone workers who may be exposed to greater risks than those conducting similar tasks as part of a team or under supervision. It is important therefore to identify staff who are lone workers, ensure awareness of the potential hazards and manage the risks involved.

2.2 A lone worker is a person who undertakes a specific activity unaccompanied or without immediate access to another person for assistance. It is not where individuals experience brief situations in which they find themselves alone, but where individuals are knowingly placed in circumstances where they work without direct or close supervision.

2.3 For most circumstances, there are no specific legal duties on employers in relation to lone working. However, employers have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act (HASWA) to maintain safe working arrangements and under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSWR) to carry out a risk assessment of the hazards to which their employees are exposed. It is within this framework that any additional risk faced by lone workers should be generally addressed. If the risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, then other arrangements must be put in place.

2.4 There are, however, specific work situations where the law requires that at least two employees must be engaged in an activity (e.g. Work in confined spaces, Diving operations, etc.).

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Line Manager

3.1.1 For a line manager, establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers should be no different to organising the safety of other staff. Line managers should be fully familiar with the work staff are expected to undertake and assess whether the requirements of the task can be met by a person working alone, and without placing that person significantly more at risk than when working with others.

3.1.2 Not all staff will be suitable to undertake lone working activities and the line manager shall, so far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that lone workers have no known temporary or long-term medical conditions (mental or physical) which would make them unsuitable for working alone and shall take into consideration foreseeable emergency situations. Medical advice should be sought as appropriate from occupational health nursing advisers, civilian welfare officers or service medical officers, civilian occupational health service, local health and safety advisors or the appropriate CESO organisation.

3.1.3 The line manager shall ensure that appropriate risk assessments are carried out and recorded for the activities undertaken by lone workers. The findings of the risk assessments and any necessary control measures implemented shall be brought to the attention of staff and the line manager satisfied that staff understand the control measures and the risks arising from the hazards associated with the activity. Risk assessments shall consider:

- a. if the working environment presents a special risk to the lone worker (e.g. cramped, excessive temperatures, poor visibility, isolated, slippery/wet, below ground level, etc).
- b. if there is safe access and egress (if temporary access equipment [e.g. ladders] is required, can it be handled safely by one person).
- c. if all of the plant and equipment, substances and articles involved in the work can be safely handled by one person.

- d. if there is a method of communicating with the person working alone and how can that person summon help if needed (e.g. telephone, radio, personal alarm, panic button, etc).
- e. foreseeable emergency situations (e.g. fire, equipment failures, illness, accidents, deterioration in weather conditions, assaults, etc).

3.1.4 Line managers shall define the limits of what can and cannot be done whilst working alone; specify how and when the lone worker should stop work or seek advice in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of their training. Line managers shall ensure that lone workers fully understand the hazards associated with the activity and the risks arising from the hazards, the necessary precautions to remove or control the risks, and be sufficiently experienced and competent.

3.1.5 Procedures shall be put in place to monitor the safety and general well being of lone workers, and include, as a minimum, a check at the end of the working period to ensure that the lone worker has safely vacated the work area and is returning to their base or home.

3.1.6 The extent of supervision required is a management decision which should be based on the findings of the risk assessment. It is vital that staff who are to work alone are fully involved in the planning of the work and in setting up the systems that will ensure their safety. Their views must be taken into account and the likelihood of needing assistance should be fully discussed.

3.1.7 The responsibility for ensuring safe systems of work are implemented for lone working lies with the person who manages the work; this responsibility cannot be delegated to the lone worker although they will ultimately be implementing it. Therefore the line manager shall periodically visit the lone worker (frequency of visits will be dependent on the risk) to observe working practices and confirm that control measures are effective and being complied with and keep a record of such visits.

3.1.8 Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations and any additional emergency arrangements required shall be identified and staff trained to implement them. Lone workers shall have access to adequate first aid facilities for treating minor injuries and be trained in first aid to an appropriate level if required.

3.2 All Staff

3.2.1 As the line management control that can be exercised over lone working staff is limited, staff working alone often have a more active role in managing their own health and safety.

3.2.3 Staff shall ensure that they fully understand and implement all management controls put in place to enable the lone working activity to be conducted safely and keep within the scope of the agreed lone work and work

areas. Where staff identify that they cannot implement all management controls they must not start work and are to contact their line manager for advice, e.g. conditions at a work location have changed since their last visit. Staff shall co-operate with their line manager bringing to their attention any concerns that they may have about any workplace health and safety issues, in particular any new hazards that arise during the lone working activity.

3.2.4 If circumstance dictates that an activity becomes an unplanned lone working one, staff shall stop the activity if it is safe to do so and inform their line manager of the circumstances, any reason(s) why they would be unable to work alone, and request details of any additional control measures they should take prior to commencing the activity.

GUIDANCE

When travelling abroad, in the UK or working in a remote location, 112 can be dialed free of charge from any telephone or mobile phone to contact the emergency services (Ambulances, Fire & Rescue Service and the Police) in the European Union (EU), as well as several other countries in the world. Using this number has an advantage especially when using a mobile phone as EU Directive E112 (a location-enhanced version of 112) requires mobile phone networks to provide emergency services with whatever information they have about the location a mobile call was made.

Even if you don't know exactly where you are, using 112 on your mobile phone will allow the system to pinpoint your precise location within about the first 30 seconds of your call to the telecom operator and the operator automatically transmits the location information to the emergency centre so they can get the appropriate help to you as quickly as possible.

The GSM mobile phone standard designates 112 as an emergency number, so it will work on GSM phones even in North America where GSM systems redirect emergency calls to 911, or Australia where emergency calls are redirected to 000 (although location information may not be automatically transmitted). 112 can be dialed on most GSM phones even if the phone is locked.

4. RELATED DOCUMENTS

4.1 The following documents should be consulted in conjunction with this leaflet:

JSP 375 Vol 2:

- a. Leaflet 27 – First Aid at Work
- b. Leaflet 35 – The Health and Safety of Young Persons
- c. Leaflet 36 – New and Expectant Mothers at Work
- d. Leaflet 39 – Health and Safety Risk Assessment
- e. Leaflet 41 – Managing Staff Remotely
- f. Leaflet 55 – Retention of Records

Legislation and Guidance:

- a. The Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSAW) Regulations
- b. The Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations
- c. Health and Safety Executive Guidance INDG73 – Working alone in safety; Controlling the risks of solitary work