

Solo Worker Guidance

Introduction

There are many occasions when staff work on their own. Most commonly this is staff carrying out administration or scholarly activity in an office environment early or late in the day. For solo working of this nature the [Safety Guidance for Working Early/Late in Buildings/Offices](#) which gives guidance on basic security and safety should be followed.

For other Solo Working the following guidance should be followed:

Legislation

With the exception of a small number of activities such as deep sea diving there is no Health and Safety legislation that prohibits solo working. Legislation does however require that a risk assessment is carried out.

Requirements of Risk Assessment

As part of the Risk Assessment process, solo workers (who can be staff or students) undertaking activities either on or off the campus such as manual handling or working with machinery need to be identified. A solo worker is a person who works by themselves, carrying out a hazardous activity without close or direct supervision as a key feature of their role on a very regular basis.

The risk assessment needs to assess the potential hazards faced by solo workers and assess the risks involved both to the solo worker and to any person who may be affected by their work. During this process the particular problems solo workers can face need to be addressed with special attention being given to the following issues:

- Can the risk of the job be adequately controlled by one person? Solo workers should not be put at more risk than other employees.
- Precautions in place should account for normal work and foreseeable emergencies, eg fire, equipment failure and accidents.
- Has the solo worker been provided with the required training (especially important when there is limited supervision)?
- Can machinery and equipment be used safely by one person?
- Is there a risk of violence to the solo worker?
- Is there a medical condition that prevents the worker from working alone?

As part of the Risk Assessment it is good practice to discuss the risks with the solo worker as they can be a valuable source of information and advice. Effective consultation will also help to ensure that all relevant hazards are identified and appropriate and proportionate control measures are chosen.

Implementing the Risk Assessment

On completion of the Risk Assessment any identified **control measures** must be put in place to control and avoid risks. These will typically include instruction, training, supervision and the issue of personal protective equipment.

The Risk Assessment will also identify the level of supervision required, the level of which will be determined by the risks involved. A simple rule of thumb is the higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. For those new to a role, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations there may be a need for them to be accompanied at first prior to them being allowed to carry out a task as a solo worker.

As part of the supervision of solo workers, procedures should always be put in place to monitor solo workers which can include:

- Periodic visits from supervisors
- Regular contact using mobile phones, radios or e-mail, particularly when work is being carried out off campus
- Checks to ensure that a solo worker has returned to their base or home once their task is complete

It is also important that the risk assessment is shared with the solo worker(s) so they are aware of the risks associated with their work, the measures in place to reduce risk and the level of supervision being provided. The risk assessment should also be shared with the health and safety centre.

Safezone

For anyone engaging in Solo Working activities we strongly recommend signing up to the University's Safezone App as an appropriate control measure. The Safezone app is free to staff and students and has a number of features:

- Safezone lets you **get help quickly** in a personal Emergency, or if someone needs First Aid or General Help
- Safezone lets you **check in** when you are working alone or in high-risk areas, to share your status with the response team. You can set a timer on your Check-In session that will automatically alert the team if you become unresponsive
- As a Safezone user you will **receive notifications** so you know what to do in an emergency

Making the most of Safezone is easy to do. Simply go to the App Store on your Smart phone and download the Safezone App. You can get more information at www.safezoneapp.com

Prohibition of Solo Working

There will be occasions when the Risk Assessment will identify that it is not safe for a solo worker to carry out a specific task safely. When this is determined, because there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the work might result in an accident which would be sufficiently serious to require a second person to be available to summon help, **solo working must not take place** without additional help or back up. The following list, that is not exhaustive, provides examples of tasks that are not safe for a Solo Worker:

- **Working in confined spaces** where there may be inadequate ventilation, risk of toxic gas release and/or where oxygen may be depleted to a dangerous level

- **Working at height** including the use of unsecured ladders
- **Working with dangerous machinery** unless the user has received sufficient training using the machines and they are competent to operate them.
Sufficient training, in the context of dangerous machinery, must include an appropriate period of instruction on the hazards associated with them, and the measures required to minimise the risks. The correct use of guards, safety devices and protective clothing where appropriate must be demonstrated. Operators must be shown how to access and use emergency stops on the machines. A written record of the training and competency for the task must be kept
- **Working on or near live electricity** is prohibited for Solo Workers. The Electricity at Work Regulations give the following examples of electrical work where it is recommended that the person carrying out the work should be accompanied:
 - Electrical work involving manipulation of live, un-insulated power conductors at above 240 volts using insulated tools.
 - Other work on or near bare live conductors where a person working alone would not be capable of undertaking the work safely without assistance in, for example, keeping other persons from the work area.

Further Information

Further information on solo working and the requirements of Risk Assessments may be obtained by contacting the Health and Safety Centre on Ext 2213.

Document Title: Solo Worker Guidance			
Last Review Date	12th May 2021	Author	S Westcough
Next Review Date	12th May 2023	Author Role Title	Health and Safety Manager