

Health and Safety Arrangements for Lone Working

1. Statement

- 1.1. The University acknowledges that there may be implications for its employees, students, visitors and contractors when working alone. Suitable risk assessments shall be carried out to identify the risks to lone workers and safe working arrangements shall be introduced to minimise the risks as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 1.2. Those who may be at risk shall be provided with information and training as appropriate in order to minimise the risks when working remotely from colleagues or other persons and/or outside normal working hours.
- 1.3. The University seeks to ensure that all relevant health and safety guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive is complied with. There is no general legal prohibition on working alone but the University acknowledges that there are some specific legal prohibitions affecting a small number of well-established dangerous situations such as working with live electrical conductors and entry into confined spaces.
- 1.4. The arrangements described in this policy are considered by the University to be best practice in this area and therefore ones that schools/departments are expected to follow. Where this guidance does not cover a particular situation, further advice may be sought from the Safety Office.

2. Application

- 2.1 This guidance applies to work that is specifically intended to be carried out unaccompanied or without immediate access to another person for assistance.
- 2.2 Lone working can occur:
 - During normal working hours at a remote location either within the normal workplace or off site (normal working hours are considered to be that part of the day when workplace occupancy is such that the presence of the others in the vicinity is likely),
 - When working outside normal working hours.
- 2.3 The aim of the document is to raise awareness of the hazards that may be associated with lone working and to advise schools/departments on the factors to be considered in assessing lone-worker situations in order to minimise the risks and provide a safe working environment as far as is reasonably practicable.
- 2.4 Different lone working situations exist in different areas of the University and therefore there is no one solution to minimising the risks. Examples of lone working situations at the University include working alone in laboratories, workshops,

offices, information desks; peripatetic maintenance workers; security officers on patrol; during fieldwork activities and work in the community; early workers such as cleaners and agricultural workers.

- 2.5 An individual who has either visual or audible communication with another person would generally not be considered as working alone. The presence of others in the vicinity, such as neighbouring rooms, would also be considered as allowing immediate access to another person for assistance for normal risk activities.
- 2.6 Although the guidance does apply to lone working in offices, it is understood that the risks are usually minimal and are likely to be related to the location of the work as opposed to the process being carried out. A generic risk assessment would be sufficient with any arrangements for safe working written into the School/Departmental Safety Policy.
To cover such situations as employees working late in an office environment at their own discretion, a standard risk assessment is given in Appendix 1 (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/lone-working-Appendix-RA.xls> - first worksheet) to demonstrate the standard control measures that should be in place.
- 2.7 This guidance document does not deal specifically with fieldwork, please refer to the University's guidance:
(<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/fieldwork-policy.pdf>).

3. Responsibility for Lone Working Procedures

- 3.1 The Head of School or Department is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place to enable safety during lone working. In particular lone working situations should be identified, risk assessments carried out for these and adequate control measures introduced.
- 3.2 Individuals are responsible for complying with the control measures arising out of the risk assessment.

4. The Risk Assessment Process

- 4.1 The reasons for assessing the risks of working alone are to establish:
- Whether the work can be done safely by an unaccompanied person;
 - The arrangements necessary to ensure that an individual is not exposed to greater risks than normal when working alone.
- 4.2 Special attention is needed when assessing lone working because the risks inherent in such work are exacerbated by the lack of the normal channels of support, e.g. first aid provision. Working alone by definition means there will be no direct supervision. The training provided to those working alone, and the level of competence that they will need to demonstrate before being allowed to do so, are therefore especially important.
- 4.3 The process of conducting a risk assessment for lone working is no different to that used when assessing other work activities. Each School and Department

should adhere to its procedures for risk assessment and draw up practical arrangements for dealing with lone working situations. General guidance on risk assessment is available, see reference section. **Appendix - worksheet 1** (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/lone-working-Appendix-RA.xls>) - contains a generic risk assessment to assist Schools/departments in formulating their lone working policy for low risk activities including out of hours office activities. The findings should be incorporated into local safety arrangements.

Appendix – worksheet 2

(<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/lone-working-Appendix-RA.xls>) contains a more detailed risk assessment template for use in higher risk activities.

- 4.4 The risk assessment should identify the physical controls, systems of work, training and supervision necessary to ensure the safety of the lone worker. It is important to consult with the lone worker on what is involved.
- 4.5 Once the safe working arrangements have been implemented they need to be regularly monitored to ensure they remain effective. Monitoring the way in which people are working is a routine day-to-day management function. More formal monitoring of the arrangements should take place during local safety inspections/audits. Lone workers must be actively encouraged to report any incidents which could affect their safety to allow a proper review of the adequacy of the working arrangements.
- 4.6 All risk assessments should be reviewed at regular intervals (every two years) or whenever there is any reason to believe that the existing assessment is no longer valid. A record should be made of each review carried out.
- 4.7 The risk assessment process should encompass the following three aspects:
 - The individual expected to be a lone worker
 - The premises/location where the lone working will take place
 - The processes to be carried out by the lone worker

4.7.1 Individual

- **Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?**
Medical fitness should not be a significant factor when considering typical office activities conducted outside normal hours. However in other situations it may be necessary to check with the person that they do not have any medical conditions that could place them at increased risk when working alone. Both routine work and foreseeable emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual. When medical advice is necessary, Occupational Health should be consulted. Also consider mobility issues in terms of evacuation from the work area and whether assistance is required.
- **Has the person received sufficient training and are they competent?**
Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. Training may be critical to avoid

panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and precautions fully.

Schools/Departments should establish clear procedures and set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone. There should be agreement as to the circumstances in which it is correct to stop work and seek advice.

It is a management responsibility to ensure employees and students are competent to carry out the work unaccompanied and to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training.

Part of the training given to lone workers must be to impress upon them the need to report any incidents which could affect their safety as such information is essential to the review of the adequacy of the working arrangements.

Where training is required as part of the control strategy, this should be recorded as part of the risk assessment.

- **Personal Safety**

There may be issues of personal safety for lone workers, either whilst the lone worker is working or on their route to and from the work place. In particular, the safety of female lone workers should be considered. It may be necessary to provide personal alarms or workplace alarms, organise a buddy system, improve lighting on routes to and from the work room and provide means for the lone worker to seek refuge if they feel threatened. (See Appendix 3 for further information.)

- **What monitoring/supervision of the individual is appropriate?**

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on the University to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision complements the information, instruction and training provided and helps to ensure that staff and students understand the risks associated with their work and that necessary safety precautions are carried out. It also provides guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the ability and experience of the lone worker to identify and handle health and safety issues. Those new to a task, undergoing training, doing a task that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first.

The level of supervision required is a management decision that should be based on the findings of risk assessment. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required. It should not be left to individuals to decide whether they require assistance.

Refer to the University's policy on supervision of students (see Further Reading section at end of document).

See Appendix 3 for examples of procedures that could be put in place to monitor the safety of lone workers.

4.7.2 Location/Premises

- **Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?**
Consider security of buildings and also access to secluded car parks and walkways.

Consider lone workers in the community where members of the University need to visit people in other organisations or in their own homes. The latter requires very careful risk assessment in terms of getting to and from the location and being in somebody's home that is not known to anyone. The School of Community Health Sciences have developed a good system for covering community visits. Refer to the Safety Office for further information.

(See Appendix 4 for measures that staff/students should be aware of if involved in community visits).

- **Are the welfare facilities adequate?**
For example, there should be adequate heating and access to drinking water and toilets outside normal hours. Hygiene facilities should be available as for work that is accompanied.
- **Is there a safe way in and out for one person?**
If working outside of normal hours, checks should be made to ensure that all exits from a building could be used as means of escape in case of an emergency. Lone workers should not be expected to leave their workplace by way of dark corridors or stairways. Special arrangements may need to be made to ensure that lights are kept on in buildings when people are working outside normal hours.
- **What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?**
The assessment should take account of the fact that a lone worker may be more vulnerable when the unexpected happens. Risk assessment should identify foreseeable events and emergency procedures should be established and the workers trained in them. Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly to emergencies and should have access to adequate first-aid facilities. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

4.7.3 Process

- **Can the risks be adequately controlled by one person?**
Workers should not be at more risk when working alone than when accompanied so extra risk control measures may be required. Precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents.
- **Is there a risk of violence?**
Consider activities where there is high value involved, e.g. cash handling, expensive equipment being carried, and interaction with members of the public.

Also consider matters of personal safety as mentioned above. (Also see Appendix 4.)

- **Can all the machinery, substances and goods involved in the work be safely handled by one person?**

Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large or heavy for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment. Will equipment need to be moved and if so can this be done safely – think of heavy or bulky items? Also consider any necessary temporary access equipment, such as portable ladders or trestles – can this be used safely alone?

- **High risk processes where lone working must be avoided:**

It is generally unacceptable for people to work alone with powered workshop machinery because of the possibility of contact with dangerous parts. Careful consideration needs to be given to working alone with laboratory chemicals as the action in the event of an emergency may require the immediate assistance of a second person, for example if a chemical is splashed in the eye. Work with very toxic substances such as hydrofluoric acid and cyanides should never be carried out alone because of the specific first aid requirements. Work with very corrosive, highly flammable or chemically unstable substances may require assistance to be readily available to help deal with serious problems such as a large uncontained spillage. In no circumstances should lone workers carry out techniques that are new or unfamiliar to them.

4.8 Recording the findings of the assessment

4.8.1 Risk assessments may be generic or specific:

- *Generically*, for example to consider all office-based work within a department conducted outside normal hours OR
- *Individually*, for example to consider a specific request from an individual who wishes to conduct an experiment in the field.

4.8.2 In the former case, assessment is most usefully recorded as part of the arrangements in the School/Departmental Safety Policy. Specific assessments need to be recorded individually. The aim should be to record the findings in a way that provides a useful working document for supervisors and staff. They will then understand the action they need to take and will find it easier to decide when the assessment needs to be reviewed or where further preventative measures are necessary.

4.8.3 All records of risk assessments should include information on:

- the hazards identified
- the safe working arrangements that must be employed, including physical controls, training and supervision
- monitoring/contact arrangements
- contingency/emergency plans
- in the case of work outside normal hours, the definition of the term 'normal hours'

- in the case of individual assessments, the date of the assessment and the latest date for review.

5. Related issues

5.1 Unattended experiments or equipment.

Unattended experiments or equipment should be safe to be left operating unsupervised for extended periods and contingency arrangements should be in place for responding to any problems that arise. This is commonly achieved through display of an information card at the unattended experiments/equipment. If relevant, the system to be used should be stated in the School/Departmental Safety Policy.

5.2 Groups using buildings out of hours.

The risks associated with groups using buildings out of hours should be considered, particularly when the group is not supervised by a person(s) who is familiar with the emergency procedures for the building. The University section responsible for "letting" the room should ensure that groups are furnished with the appropriate information and the risks have been considered in discussion with the group leader.

5.3 Normal Working Hours

Flexible working hours are a valuable and necessary component of the University's operation, especially in facilitating research work. However, lone working situations can arise when working outside "normal working hours", i.e. that period when occupancy levels are much reduced from the usual daytime level and the normal support infrastructure for dealing with problems might not be available. Wherever reasonably practicable work should be contained within recognised working hours and operational requirements for working outside these times should not be used to justify poor planning and undisciplined working arrangements.

School/departmental procedures should define their 'normal working hours' and arrangements for lone working situations arising outside of these.

6 Further reading

6.1 University of Nottingham references:

- Guidelines for Safety in Fieldwork: (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/fieldwork-policy.pdf>)
- Health and Safety Responsibilities of Supervisors Towards Postgraduates and Undergraduates: (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/documents/student-supervision.docx>)
- University Procedures for Risk Assessment: (<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/safety/policies-and-guidance/risk-assessment/risk-assessment.aspx>)
- Some Schools/Departments have developed systems for lone working in the community that may be of use, contact the Safety Office for further details (Ext. 13401)

6.2 Other references

Further guidance on lone working can be found in the following references, which are available on loan from the Safety Office.

- HSE leaflet - Working alone in Safety, INDG73 (rev) 1/05
- UCEA Guidance on Safety in Fieldwork. (2005).
http://www.ucea.ac.uk/objects_store/UCEA%20H&S%20Safety%20in%20Fieldwork.pdf
- NERC Guidance Note: A Safe System of Fieldwork (15 May 2007).

Appendices

[Appendix 1](#) Lone working risk assessment proforma for offices
(see first worksheet)

[Appendix 2](#) Lone working risk assessment proforma (see second
worksheet)

Appendix 3

Examples of procedures for monitoring lone workers

1. Supervisors periodically visiting and observing people working alone. Post-task discussions should confirm whether or not any problems were identified that will need addressing.
2. Supervisors maintaining contact with lone workers using either a telephone or radio. Contact arrangements should be documented as part of the risk assessment. Contact arrangements should ideally be between the supervisor and the lone worker, or with another member of the department. If this is not possible and the contact is by arrangement with a personal friend or family member, it is essential that the latter be briefed on the procedure to follow if contact cannot be made.
3. The use of signing-in systems. These are useful for monitoring the safety of lone workers if there is a procedure for actively checking the safety of those who have recorded their presence in a building. Their main use tends to be in the event of a fire or similar emergency as they provide an indication of where people are working in a building. Although Security officers on patrol have a remit for checking on those who have signed into a building out of hours, they are not responsible for monitoring unless this has been specifically agreed with them.
4. Ensuring that there is a person within visual or audible contact. It is not sufficient to see that another person has signed into a similar area of the building. It must be agreed that the person is to be a back-up to the lone worker.
5. Automatic warning devices that operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker (more information available from the Safety Office).
6. 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.
7. Arrangements for checks to be made to ensure that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.
8. Contingency plans specifying the action to be taken should a pre-arranged contact not be made, or an alarm device operate.

Personal security guidance for staff, students and visitors

(Much of the guidance below has been taken from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust information)

Whilst the probability of becoming the victim of violent attack is relatively small, this guidance seeks to give lone workers some sensible measures that can help to reduce further the risk of physical or verbal attack. This advice is not intended to cause alarm, violent attacks remain isolated incidents.

The access control systems installed in University buildings will greatly assist with the security of staff whilst in the building, but coming to and from the work still poses an increased risk to personal security, especially during the hours of darkness.

The first consideration must be **whether you need to be in the building out of hours** - this is the first principle of risk management - **elimination**. Therefore, it should be School policy that Principal Investigators and Senior Managers should, wherever possible, try to arrange work/experiments to avoid the need for their staff, students and visitors to work alone after hours.

Other ways of reducing the risk include:

- If you suspect a problem in the building whilst working, lock your office door and call for University Security (8888).
- at least two members of the department work together and leave/enter the building together;
- parking cars as close as possible to the main entrance;
- should a taxi be required, then a reputable taxi firm (preferably one regularly used by the University, information available from Commercial Services) should be used, and the name of the driver and make (and colour) of car being sent should be noted - do not get into a car that you have not ordered!
- be aware of the risk of attack when withdrawing cash from machines - again, not going alone will reduce the risk.

When walking alone, follow these guidelines:

- try to adopt a confident manner, as you are less likely to be attacked;
- be aware of what is going on around you (personal stereos/MP3 players are not a good idea);
- dress appropriately - wear shoes that are easy to walk and run in. Think about the message that your clothes send to others;
- know exactly where you are going, and walk safely by keeping to well lit roads, avoid alleys and subways, walk facing oncoming traffic on the street side of the pavement.
- avoid groups of people who may be a threat;
- be wary of parked vehicles with engines running and people sitting in them;
- if someone grabs your bag or wallet, consider letting it go to avoid violent attack;
- avoid carrying excessive amounts of money / valuables, and keep cheque books and cheque cards separate;
- if you think you are being followed, check by crossing the street and if you are still

- being followed, quickly go to the nearest place with people and call the police;
- report all incidents, as this will enable pressure to be brought on the police to provide improved patrolling;
 - Consider carrying a personal alarm and ensure you know how to use it. Keep the alarm close to hand; you may not have time to retrieve it from a bag or briefcase.

When making visits to people's homes, remember the following:

- When you first arrive, allow the person to lead you in rather than them following you in behind.
- Be aware of your surroundings in the home; note how you would leave the building.
- Have a reason for leaving the home if you sense a problem, e.g. there are some papers you need to fetch from the car.
- Be observant at all times of the situation, notice whether those being visited are becoming unhappy in any way.
- Park in an open space that you can easily get to and with the car pointing in the direction you would take to leave, i.e. make any manoeuvres before you go into the home.
- Lock yourself in the car when arriving and leaving.
- Look out for other places where people are if you need to seek help.
- Consider whether somebody should accompany you, either into the home or stay outside in the car.
- Avoid long conversations in kitchens or staircases where the possibility of using a utensil as a weapon or pushing on the stairs is more likely.
- Remember, it's the person's house - their territory, and you must respect that.
- If you have used public transport, be confident about where you are being dropped off and where you need to catch it when leaving.

In Summary:

AVOID RISKS

DEVELOP CONFIDENCE

DON'T ASSUME IT WON'T HAPPEN TO YOU

TAKE ACTION ON DANGER