

Safety Note 82

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LONE, PERIPATETIC & REMOTE WORKING

| Summary | |
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| <p>This document provides guidance for when lone working is unavoidable, workers travel to various work locations over the day and/or work in remote locations, away from University-controlled premises. It addresses risk assessment, control measures, communication arrangements, supervision, emergency preparedness, monitoring, training, review and workers for whom English is not their first language.</p> | |
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Summary

Risks arising from lone, peripatetic and remote working should be assessed and controlled. Such work may give rise to extra risks, the work may occur where the University has little or no control of the environment, and staff may not have the support typically available in other circumstances. Staff, supervisors and line managers are responsible for ensuring sensible, proportionate risk management, which should include advance arrangements for adequate communication, emergency preparedness, incident reporting and review.

Definitions

Lone working occurs when a person works by themselves without being accompanied or closely supervised – they do not have immediate, direct access to another person for assistance in the event of need. If an employee cannot be seen or heard by a colleague for a significant stretch of time they are a lone worker – whether that be for all or part of their working day.

Peripatetic working occurs when a person travels to undertake work in various locations, usually for relatively short periods in each location. They may have no fixed workplace, or they work at locations away from their normal workplace.

Remote working occurs when a person works in a location remote from typical University workplaces. In these places welfare facilities and risk controls, such as equipment maintenance, fire safety, first aid and security assistance, may not be provided to the usual University standard, or at all. Remote working also occurs when staff undertake work activities in their own home or in cafes, hotel rooms, etc, where the University is not in control of the workstation, noise levels, access control, etc. Remote working might occur in the context of formal, organised activities, such as field or study trips; it might also occur in the context of informal, ad hoc work arrangements, such as during extensive travel.

Each of these types of working may also simultaneously involve one or more of the other type, but not necessarily. For example:

- A professor working in their usual office late into the evening, outside normal School hours and when other colleagues are gone, is lone working but not peripatetically or remote working
- A grounds maintenance team, working together trimming vegetation in various locations on campus over a day, are peripatetically working but not lone or remote working
- A staff member at a training course, with other trainees in a building far away from UoR campuses, is remote working but not lone or peripatetic working
- A researcher visiting multiple beaches on their own, collecting sand samples for later laboratory analysis, would be lone, peripatetic and remote working, all at the same time

Risk Assessment

Early in your risk assessment process, consider whether there are reasonably practicable ways of achieving the required work without lone, peripatetic or remote working.

Your risk assessment is not finished until you have determined which control measures are required.

Lone working

Identify the hazards associated with the work. These might not be inherently different from those for a group of workers, but consider factors which might cause risk to be more significant if the work is done alone.

Hazards and factors which might increase risks for lone workers include:

- Confined Spaces and unsafe atmospheres
- Fire, fuel or ignition sources
- Work at height or difficult access
- Manual handling
- Hazardous substances, dust or contamination
- Equipment or machinery
- Travelling, wayfinding and navigation, driving, other vehicles and road users
- Weather
- Worker inexperience and/or youth
- Violence and aggression (V&A)
- Poor communication or access to advice, isolation or work-related stress

Workers own allergies, medical conditions or disabilities might require particular attention, preparation or specific risk controls. Fatigue might be particularly important where a worker is more reliant on themselves, without others to assist.

Peripatetic working

Identify the locations, or types of situations, in which workers will work, and what resources they will have access to. Consider factors which might cause risk to be more significant if the work is done out and about in various locations.

Hazards and factors which might increase risks for peripatetic workers include:

- Unfamiliar, unpredictable or changeable environments
- Worker inexperience of peripatetic working, compared to static working styles
- Roadside locations or difficulty with parking or other vehicle movements
- Interactions with the public
- Variable workspace dimensions, lighting or noise levels
- Weather
- Limited, non-existent or uncertainty about welfare facilities (toilets, sinks, eating and changing facilities)
- Limited resources within reach, such as manual handling aids, Personal Protective Equipment, first aid boxes, etc
- Variable telephone or wifi coverage

The environment and the time to complete a task may be affected by unpredicted factors, such as congestion, processions, nearby sporting events, police action, vehicle breakdown. Sensible risk management of peripatetic working should take account of the potential for greater uncertainty and the need for dynamic risk assessment.

Remote working

Identify how remote and isolated the working environment will be, and how different from typical University workplaces. Consider factors which might make risk greater or might make it more difficult to provide assistance in emergency.

Hazards and factors which might increase risks for remote workers include:

- Unfamiliar, unpredictable or changeable environments
- Outdoor environments, lakes, rivers, coasts, cliffs
- Livestock and wildlife
- Cultural differences and miscommunication, different site and security rules and requirements
- Weather
- Limited communication options
- Limited, non-existent or uncertainty about welfare facilities (toilets, sinks, eating and changing facilities) and first aid response and resources
- Difficulty with physical access and delivering or removing equipment and waste

Preparation might have to be more detailed and extensive. Extra resources might be needed if workers are to be more self-sufficient than in less remote locations. Communications arrangements might be more onerous. More set-up, testing, and clear-up activities might be needed, and more time.

Control Measures

The risk assessment decides the risk control measures needed. Once decided, implement them.

Advance thinking and planning is important – many controls can and should be implemented, or at least begun, “back at base”, well before the work begins.

Consider the following when implementing risk control measures:

- Empower workers
 - Research information your workers might need
 - If UoR is not in control of the site or premises, who is?

- Have we contacted local controllers/ managers to agree terms for our staff's access on to the site or premises
- Where do workers need to go? Can we get information in advance from satellite images, websites, local partners, etc?
- Will a local host be present to guide and assist our workers?
- Where can workers park, lay down materials, access welfare facilities, take their breaks, etc?
- How should workers ask for emergency assistance when working in situ?
- Are emergency services available? How can they be contacted?
- What's the weather forecast? Is shelter available if needed?
- Will workers need to rely on local equipment or grounds, etc? What assurance do we have it is well-maintained?
- What cultural or language differences might hinder communication?
- Will workers be exposed to contact with workers from various contractors, the public, etc?
- Are workers sufficiently mature and experienced?
- Instruction adapted for those from outside the UK, who may encounter unfamiliar environments and risks - additional supervision and check in may be required.
- Instruct or train workers on
 - Who is in local control of premises and their contact details or how to obtain them, e.g. the gatehouse at a host campus or industrial complex
 - Who will be available back "back at base" to guide or advise
 - Specific relevant skills, such as manual handling, de-escalation of conflict, radio use, etc
 - How to report incidents, injuries, near misses, which might affect health and safety etc
 - Identifying hazards, dynamically risk assessing and taking appropriate action
 - Emergency procedures, including contacting emergency services
- Confirm and assure workers they may
 - Stop a job, if they have a significant health or safety concern
 - Contact a supervisor for guidance or advice
 - Use resources provided for their benefit, such as PPE, first aid supplies, etc and will not be charged for their use
 - Contact those in local control of premises and request assistance if needed, for example local first aiders or local security staff, without fear of reprimand
 - Notify the University of incidents and trust they will be investigated to produce positive improvement, not for the purpose of penalising workers
- Check workers are fit to work
 - Have workers been encouraged to declare relevant factors, disabilities or medical conditions?
 - Is an assessment needed from Occupational Health Services
 - Consider the additional physical and mental burdens an emergency might impose on the individual
- Ensure equipment is suitable and in good condition
 - Can it be safely used by a person working alone, peripatetically or remotely, as applies
 - Are there robust and reliable arrangements to report and identify damaged or out of date equipment and take it out of service

- Is equipment inspected, tested, repaired, maintained (as applicable) before use? This might require a robust inspection regime, including periodically recalling equipment “back to base”
- Do workers need additional training to competently complete independent pre-use checks
- Where equipment is used by a lone worker they must be trained and competent to use it on their own
- Will equipment require re-fuelling, cleaning, re-setting? Are workers competent to do this and will they have access to necessary equipment or supplies?
- Where a risk assessment indicates PPE is, or may be, needed is it available?

Communications

A key risk factor in lone working is isolation from others who can provide advice and support. Good communications can, at least partially, negate this.

At initial induction, all staff should be instructed to record UoR’s Security emergency and routine enquiries phone numbers into their own mobile phone and any work mobile phones issued to them. They should also record other useful phone numbers provided to them, such as their manager or supervisor or other team members’ numbers.

For lone working, managers should, as a minimum, record in the relevant risk assessment which of the following 3 approaches to communication approach will be adopted. Details for implementation should also be recorded in the risk assessment or in team/department/school/function procedures. Agreeing to lone working with no communication arrangement is not acceptable.

The following guidance may also be useful for peripatetic and remote working.

1. Light Touch

| Situations | Communication Methods |
|---|--|
| “Hands-in pocket” style inspection of university-maintained properties. Visits to conventionally maintained public spaces, e.g. conference centres, large museums, hotels. Research in potentially hazardous but highly managed environments, e.g. UK prisons, hospitals. Out-of-normal-hours office tasks only in customary working environment, e.g. working late in own office. Lone undertaking of higher hazard tasks should normally not be permitted by the School/Function Local H&S Code – see CoP 02. | Location clear in calendar. Employee has mobile phone. Employee and manager have Event Organiser’s contact details (where applicable). For multi-day events, an agreement for the line manager or other specified colleague to make contact (message or call) at least once per day for re-assurance – there must be a pre-arrangement agreement on what action is to be taken if contact cannot be confirmed – ie receiving a response to message, not merely sending message. |

2. Active 2-way communication

| Situations | Communication Methods |
|---|---|
| <p>Note: only if there is compelling reason should the following activities be undertaken as lone working.</p> <p>Physical tasks, e.g. manual handling, driving University vehicles, operating heavy equipment or ladder use.</p> <p>Accessing plantroom, roof or cellar spaces, scaffolding or derelict/non-maintained structures.</p> <p>Agricultural work in well-frequented areas or where colleagues are making frequent contact.</p> <p>Individuals who have declared a medical condition and where there is explicit Occupational Health Service advice that monitoring is required during lone working.</p> | <p>Specific location recorded in advance through management system – e.g. calendar, team rota, CAFM system.</p> <p>Clarity on who is responsible for obtaining active confirmation that all is well at end of task or shift.</p> <p>In event of no active confirmation all is well then prompt, active investigation by Responsible Person until confirmation obtained and assistance provided.</p> |

3. Positive Confirmation & Alert

| Situations | Communication Methods |
|--|---|
| <p>Tasks requiring a Permit-to-Work (only in the most exceptional circumstances would it be appropriate for these to be undertaken as lone working).</p> <p>Agricultural work in fields, waterside and chainsaw tasks. Clinical work in private homes.</p> <p>Operation of heavy agricultural equipment and vehicles.</p> <p>Remote working with livestock.</p> <p>Specialist research in unpredictable environments , especially where the research task inherently involves deliberate interaction with known hazards, eg rubbish tips, beaches (again, only if there is a compelling reason should these activities be undertaken as lone working).</p> | <p>2-way radio, safety alert device and/or body-worn devices set to alarm in event of one-touch activation or cessation of movement. There must be planning, training and testing to ensure devices are charged, functioning, using legal wavelengths, do operate on the day and are compatible with staff PPE and environment, and colleagues are available to respond to the message signal in real time.</p> <p>Very frequent telephone or in-person checks to confirm location and health of the lone worker.</p> |

Stalking

Where an employee or student has declared a known stalker to their line manager, academic tutor or research supervisor, then any lone working should be considered carefully and may be eliminated as part of agreed temporary enhanced measures. If lone working remains required then the 3rd category of communication measures - Positive Confirmation & Alert – should be adopted.

Additionally, with the stalkee's agreement, a discrete code-word can be pre-agreed to allow the stalkee to alert colleagues over telephone/radio, without alerting a listener (stalker) that the stalkee is summoning assistance.

Alert Systems and Monitoring Devices (aka "Panic Alarms")

Panic buttons

These are fixed, installed equipment which allows manual activation of an alarm – usually audible, occasionally also visual, alarming either remotely, locally or both. In themselves, they provide no protection against violence or aggression. They are likely to reduce risk only if integrated with several additional arrangements including: training for other staff; a defined protocol for response to alarm activation; training in de-escalation techniques; and regular refresher training and exercising to reinforce competence. Without a School/Function commitment to maintain this integrated system, panic buttons cannot be relied on as a dependable risk reduction measure.

Panic buttons must not be fitted except with prior agreement with Security on whether the signal will be routed to the Security Control Room, how it will be monitored and what action is expected from Security in response to activation.

Any team considering the installation of panic buttons should, as a minimum, seek advice from their local HSC, who should then inform their Liaison Advisor and seek specialist advice from the HSS Topic Lead for V&A. The HSC should also ensure Security have been informed of the intention to fit a device.

Typically, HSS will not support the installation of panic buttons unless the local team identifies the need for them in a written risk assessment, having firstly given due consideration to other measures. Typically this would include de-escalation training, physical security controls, tailored appointment management (which might include pre-appointment screening, routing appointments to specialist advisers, pre-appointment briefings), etc.

Standalone portable alert alarms

Portable alarms are carried or body-worn devices intended for use by people as they move around, typically in outdoor spaces or transport interchanges. They may aid a person to summon attention, assistance or provide a temporary shock to an assailant.

Where introduced for use within University buildings, in lieu of installed panic buttons, then all the above guidance on panic buttons still applies and should be followed before being issued to staff as a risk control measure.

Where carried by people off-campus they may allow some to feel more empowered to respond to sudden assailants. However, their effectiveness relies entirely on the presence and response of others, likely strangers who may act unpredictably. Therefore careful consideration should be given before issuing these as a risk control measure.

They may be particularly appropriate in certain circumstances, e.g. where speech or language difficulties make summoning aid especially challenging, or in environments where it is likely trained officers will respond, e.g. airports. However, generally they should only be considered within a wider package of risk reduction measures. Any team planning to utilise these devices should seek advice from their local HSC, as a minimum.

Emergencies

Workers need to be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established and the appropriate persons, including those “back at base” or expected to provide support, should be given training and instruction on how to implement them.

First aid arrangements should be considered through the School/Directorate’s First Aid Needs Assessment (FANA) and through the activity risk assessment. Confirm adequate first aid provision is in place for the activity being carried out, considering the situation and surroundings.

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the condition of lone workers - see above on communications.

Accident Reporting

Incidents (including violence and aggression), injuries, ill-health and near misses should be notified to the University promptly and investigated. Some incidents must also be reported promptly to hosting organisations, the Police or other appropriate authorities. Notifications should include full information to allow these other reports to be completed. Make workers aware of emergency arrangements and instruct them in how and when they should contact the University of Reading’s security control room and emergency services directly.

Monitoring, Exercising & Review

Control measures should be monitored, and any deficiencies revealed should be corrected. Risk assessment must be reviewed frequently, if circumstances change, or if incidents or near misses indicate review is necessary.

In particular, communication systems, warning devices etc should be tested periodically, in according to manufacturers’ instructions, and staff not only trained but also exercised in their use.