

# Lone Worker vs. Working Remotely Policy

# What Is The Difference?

- A **Lone Worker** (LW) is an employee who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from other workers without close or direct supervision.
- **Working Remotely** (i.e., remote worker, telecommuter, etc.) is an employee who performs an activity outside of the traditional office or facility.

# What Are They?

## **As mobile workers working away from their fixed base:**

- Construction,
- Maintenance and repair,
- Plant installation and cleaning,
- Agricultural and forestry,
- Oil and Gas,
- Service workers,
- Postal staff,
- Social and medical workers,
- Engineers,
- Estate agents, and
- Sales or service - visiting domestic and commercial premises.

## **In fixed establishments**

- Small workshop,
- Gas station,
- Kiosk or shop,
- People who work from home other than in low-risk, office-type work,
- People working alone for long periods, in factories, warehouses, leisure centers or fairgrounds,
- People working on their own outside normal hours, cleaners and security, maintenance or repair staff.

# OSHA

- OSHA's underground construction rule for tunnels, shafts, chambers, and passageways (29 CFR 1926.800) requires
  - "Any employee working alone underground in a hazardous location, who is both out of the range of natural unassisted voice communication and not under observation by other persons, shall be provided with an effective means of obtaining assistance in an emergency."
- General Duty Clause
  - (a) Each employer
    - (1) shall furnish to each of his employees employment and a place of employment which are free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees;
    - (2) shall comply with occupational safety and health standards promulgated under this Act.

# OSHA - Working Alone

- 1915.84(a) Except as provided in § 1915.51(c)(3) of this part, whenever an employee is working alone, such as in a confined space or isolated location, the employer shall account for each employee:
  - 1915.84(a)(1) Throughout each workshift at regular intervals appropriate to the job assignment to ensure the employee's safety and health; and
  - 1915.84(a)(2) At the end of the job assignment or at the end of the workshift, whichever occurs first.
  - 1915.84(b) The employer shall account for each employee by sight or verbal communication.

# Lone Worker

- Work from home
  - From an office room
  - Corner desk
  - Dining room table
- It's likely that you're a lone worker.
- Work activities
  - Isolation from other workers
  - Without close direct supervision.

# Working from Home Health & Safety

- On the surface, working from home doesn't seem to present many risks to health and safety.
  - You're familiar with the environment
  - You know how the equipment works
  - You know your way around the premises.
- That doesn't mean you're free from risk.
- In fact, more accidents happen in the home than anywhere else.
- Just because you're working in a familiar environment, it doesn't mean the health and safety risks shouldn't be addressed

# Medical Services and First Aid

OSHA's rules for medical treatment and first aid (29 CFR 1910.151 for general industry and 1926.50 for construction) require employers to ensure that someone at the worksite is trained to administer first aid and that first-aid supplies are readily available unless there is a hospital, clinic, or infirmary for treating injured employees in close proximity (within 3 to 4 minutes for life-threatening emergencies). This means medical treatment and first aid must be made immediately available to all employees, including lone workers.

Standard Interpretations OSHA requirements for providing training for first aid, CPR, and BBP for prompt treatment of injured employees at various workplaces. [Standard Number: 1910.151 1910.151(b) 1910.266 1910.266(i)(7) 1910.269 1910.269(b) 1910.1030 1910.1030(b) 1910.1030(g)(2) 1926.50 1926.50(c)]



# Food For Thought...

- Establishing effective safety monitoring practices for lone workers is no less important than managing the safety of other employees.
- You need to know the laws and standards that apply to a lone worker's activities and then assess whether the requirements can be met by people working alone.

# Policy

- Ultimately, your policy should aim to provide lone workers with practical advice and instruction on how to safely work alone.
- Your policy will be developed as an extension to your lone working risk assessment.
- The policy document will include your risk assessment
  - Procedures to complete the risk assessment
  - Procedures to reduce or eliminate the identified risks

# Policy – Statement & Definitions

- Policy Statement
  - The policy statement is made up of one or two paragraphs outlining the organizations dedication to meeting their legal requirements.
- Definitions
  - They must be clear and concise, so employees know when they apply.
  - (For example, do you consider those working late in the office alone to be lone working or does your policy only refer to those leaving the office to carry out home visits?)

# Policy - Purpose

- Provides an opportunity to let your employees know you care about their safety
- The focus here should be on the benefits to their wellbeing rather than your own benefits or legal requirements.
- Placing emphasis on safety and wellbeing will help to encourage compliance

# Policy – Risk Assessment

- Risk Assessment
  - Establish a list of risk identified
  - Broken down by job role, location and lone worker type
- Workers carrying out different roles
  - Consider writing several policies
  - Help employees to better understand the risks relevant to them and avoid having to read through irrelevant information

# Policy - Procedures and Measures

- Employees know what actions you have taken to reduce risk and what is expected of them
- Provide briefs and training on the procedures your employees need to follow

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# Policy - Responsibilities

- Identify and define the responsibilities of each employee, management included
- Be clear on which responsibilities lie on the lone worker and which lie on their supervisor



# Policy - Responsibilities

Employees Working Alone are responsible for

- Recognizing the hazards associated with their jobs and how to minimize them
- Reporting hazards to supervisors or internal system/department
- Working alone only when necessary, rescheduling assignments (when possible) to keep from working alone
- Participate in a check-in system by contacting someone at regular intervals
- Carry a personal safety alarm, cell phone or two-way radio. Ensure sufficient operation and battery life

# Policy - Responsibilities

Supervisors/Departments/Management are responsible for

- Communicating these guidelines to employees and contractors through training programs
- Ensuring work performed alone or in isolation has a completed risk assessment that has been shared with the lone worker
- Adequate control measures are implemented prior to approval of work
- Consulting and training staff, employees and contractors that work alone
- Provide communication devices such as cell phones, radios, personal safety alarms
- Ensure employee health and safety

# Policy - Responsibilities

- Ensure lone workers understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out
- Provide guidance in situations of uncertainty
- Implement controls to eliminate or control hazards prior to lone work
- Supervision of health and safety issues when checking the progress and quality of work; periodic site visits and discussions in which health and safety issues are raised
- Provide video surveillance cameras, limit public access, lock all unused doors, coded cards or keys to control access to buildings, alarms, panic buttons, emergency phones, fire alarm or security guards when necessary

## Policy – Training

- 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 /or trained to understand the risks and how to fully take precautions

Inform them, Educate them, Train them and  
Evaluate your Training!

# Policy – Reporting

- Outline how and when your employees are expected to report a hazard or incident
- Who is responsible for reporting (employee or HSE representative)
- Identify the means for reporting (form or online portal)

# Policy – Help & Support

- Include additional information on who employees can contact if they have any concerns or require additional support
- HSE representatives, external agencies, charities or support groups

# Policy

- To ensure your employees understand and follow your policy, you should keep it as concise and simple as possible.
- Use language they would understand
- Outline what is expected of them as clearly as possible.
- Clarity is important for the layout of the document as well as the language used

# Policy – Maintain & Update

- Review and update regularly
- It is important that your policy is regularly updated whenever your risk assessment is re-assessed
- Whenever you introduce new employee policies such as a new training course
- Implement a lone worker device



# Policy - Involvement

- Involve your lone workers, supervisors, managers
- In order to get your lone workers on board with your new policy, you should consider involving them in all aspects of the process
- Ask them to help you identify risks and suggest ways they would feel safer

# Policy

- Once your lone working policy has been developed, consider holding a workshop or health and safety day where you can openly discuss why you have developed the policy and what has been put in place.
- Be sure to focus on a clear safety message and the benefits to your lone workers.

## Policy - Be Direct

- Encourage adoption through focusing on employee safety and wellbeing
- You also need your employees to understand that the policies and procedures you have implemented are a requirement and non-optional.
- Be direct in the language you use in your lone working policy
- Avoid using words such as ‘you should’ or ‘you could’ which suggests a choice. Use ‘You must’ or ‘It is a requirement that...’

# Questions