

Lone Working:

Safe When You're on Your Own

Risk assessment for lone workers, check-in procedures, personal safety devices, employer duty of care and what to do in an emergency.

 Last reviewed: August 2026

 HSE · HSWA 1974 · Management Regs 1999

 England, Scotland and Wales

ukworkrights.co.uk

In Northern Ireland, similar duties come from Northern Ireland's own health and safety law. Contact HSENI (Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland), not the HSE.

What counts as lone working?

- Anyone working **without close or direct supervision** — either alone at a fixed location or in the field
- Common examples: **home workers, delivery drivers, community nurses, estate agents, cleaners, security guards, engineers, care workers**
- Around **6 million people** in the UK lone work at some point in their working week
- Lone workers face the same risks as other workers — plus the **additional risk of having no immediate help** available
- Employers must carry out a **specific risk assessment** for lone working
- Some jobs should **never be done alone** — where the risk is too high even with controls (e.g. confined space entry, live electrical work)

▲ YOUR EMPLOYER MUST ASSESS THE RISK

A general risk assessment is not sufficient. Lone working must be specifically assessed — who, where, when, what could go wrong, and how will it be managed.

Keeping lone workers safe

1

Check-in system

Regular check-ins by phone, app or radio at agreed intervals. If a check-in is missed, a pre-agreed escalation procedure must kick in.

2

Personal safety devices

Lone worker devices with GPS tracking, panic button, man-down detection and automatic escalation to a monitoring centre.

3

Mobile phone with signal check

Confirm adequate mobile coverage at the work location before sending a lone worker. Provide a satellite phone or radio where coverage is poor.

4

Safe travel and location sharing

Workers should share their location and expected return time. A supervisor should always know where a lone worker is.

5

Training for violence and aggression

Lone workers in customer-facing or domiciliary roles face higher risks of violence. Training in de-escalation and safe exit is essential.

Frequently asked questions

Q Can I refuse to lone work if I think it's unsafe?

Yes. Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, you are protected if you leave or refuse to return to work in circumstances of danger you reasonably believe to be serious and imminent. If adequate controls for lone working are not in place, raise it with your supervisor or through your safety rep before refusing — but your right to refuse remains.

Q Is my employer responsible for my safety when I work from home?

Yes. Working from home is a form of lone working. Your employer must assess the risks of home working — including your workstation, electrical safety and stress — and take reasonable steps to control them. This applies even if the home working is informal.

Q Do I have to be contactable at all times when lone working?

You must be able to contact and be contacted in an emergency — this is a safety requirement. However, your employer cannot require you to be contactable 24/7 beyond reasonable working hours without additional working time protections in place.

Q Who pays for lone worker safety devices?

Your employer must provide them — a lone worker device is PPE for the purpose of personal safety. You should not be expected to fund your own lone worker protection.

Delivery notes & attendance record

Before you start

Lone working is not illegal — unassessed lone working is the problem. Cover what happens if someone does not check in, because that is usually the gap.

Questions to ask the team

1. Who works alone here, and does everyone know when they do?
2. What is our check-in arrangement and what happens if a check-in is missed?
3. What would you do if you felt threatened while working alone?
4. Is there anywhere on our sites with no phone signal?

The law behind this talk

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (regs. 3 and 10); Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 s.2(2)(c)

Employers must give workers comprehensible information, instruction and training on the risks they face — Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 s.2(2)(c) and Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 reg. 10. Keep the record below as evidence that you did.

Attendance record

Topic

Lone Working: Safe When You're on Your Own

Date

Site / location

Delivered by

Actions agreed

Next talk due

Attendees

Name

Signature

Use the Print handout button to print this record. General guidance only, not legal advice. This toolbox talk is generic material and is not a substitute for a suitable and sufficient risk assessment by a competent person. Employers remain responsible for their duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

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Get plain-English guidance on your rights and your employer's legal duties.

HSE ADVISORY TEAM

0300 003 1747

hse.gov.uk

ACAS

0300 123 1100

acas.org.uk

CITIZENS ADVICE

0800 144 8848

citizensadvice.org.uk

UK WORK RIGHTS

Lone Working

ukworkrights.co.uk/toolbox-loneworking.html

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