



University of Sussex
Health, Safety & Wellbeing Office

Management of Lone Working Risks Policy

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Scope
3. Purpose
4. Definitions
5. Responsibilities
6. Details of procedure/operational details
7. Monitoring & review
8. References/Related Documents

1. Introduction

The University of Sussex has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff and others who may be affected by the work of the University.

The University acknowledges that there may be an increased risk to the health and safety of its employees, students and third parties when working alone and is committed to making adequate provision for the health and safety of lone workers.

The key requirement of responsible persons is to carry out a risk assessment to identify risks to lone workers and to ensure that control measures are implemented to minimise the risks wherever practicable. These requirements are applicable to all work situations/activities and in particular where staff, students and visiting workers are working alone or outside normal working hours.

This policy gives information about lone working risks, sets out the responsibilities of the University and others for the managing the safety of lone workers and gives guidance on the lone working risk assessment process.

2. Scope

- 2.1** This policy applies to the management of the risks associated with lone working on or off Campus and all departments are required to have in place local arrangements that comply with this policy.
- 2.2** The policy applies to all University staff, including temporary and contract workers or who are provided by an agency, and students. Some policy areas are also applicable to contractors.
- 2.3** The policy is not intended to apply generally to staff who are the sole occupiers of an office during normal working hours unless for some reason their work presents lone working hazards, nor is it intended to apply to student residents in their Halls.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Reduce the risks presented by lone working;
- Define responsibilities;

- Adopt a consistent approach to the safety of lone workers throughout the University;
- Comply with relevant legislation.

4. Definitions

- 4.1 Lone Workers.** The HSE defines lone workers as those who ‘work by themselves without close or direct supervision’. In this policy the term ‘lone workers’ means any person meeting the HSE’s definition who are working, studying or carrying out research on behalf of the University, whether they are working on or off Campus. Third parties (not students or employees) working on Campus may also be lone workers. However, the responsibility of the University towards third party lone workers is different and this is defined in the policy.
- 4.2 Staff.** The term ‘staff’ is used throughout this document to refer to all employees of the University, whether from faculty or any other groupings.
- 4.3 Managers and Supervisors.** This term is used to describe all those with a responsibility for the management of staff, in whatever category.
- 4.4 Risk Assessment.** The HSE defines risk assessment as the process of examining work and the workplace to identify what could cause harm to persons who are the responsibility of the employer or who could be harmed by the work activities of the organisation. Workers and third parties have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.
- 4.5 Normal working hours and out-of-hours.** Normal working hours are considered to be between 0830 hours to 1730 hours on weekdays (does not include bank holidays, minimum service days or weekends). Therefore ‘out-of-hours’ is anytime outside of these normal working hours. Some faculties and directorates may have different work patterns and this may influence their classification and management of lone workers. However, the

University's emergency response team is not available after normal working hours and this should be considered in the risk assessment of lone working activities.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 The University will:

- 5.1.1 seek to ensure that the risks to employees and students associated with lone working are identified, evaluated and controlled, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- 5.1.2 cooperate with third parties to ensure that the risks of lone working are controlled, so far as is reasonably practicable;
- 5.1.3 allocate sufficient resources to ensure lone working risks can be identified and effectively controlled.

5.2 Heads of Faculty and Directors must:

- 5.2.1 seek to ensure that a risk assessment of lone working is carried out, control measures are introduced and that appropriate records are maintained for their areas of responsibility;
- 5.2.2 seek to ensure that measures are implemented and maintained to reduce the risk of lone working to its lowest reasonably practicable level within their areas of responsibility;
- 5.2.3 seek to ensure that all staff, students and visitors to departments are aware of the University's arrangements and any additional local arrangements for lone working through appropriate information, instruction and training;
- 5.2.4 seek to ensure that sufficient resources are made available to control and manage lone working arrangements with respect to health and safety within their departments;
- 5.2.5 ensure that their faculty or directorate has measures in place to know who is working out-of-hours;
- 5.2.6 ensure the effectiveness of this policy is monitored.

5.3 Managers and Supervisors must:

- 5.3.1 ensure that the staff, students and visitors they are responsible for are aware of the risks of lone working and relevant lone working procedures;
- 5.3.2 ensure that the risks of lone working are considered in risk assessments and that records are maintained for their areas of responsibility;
- 5.3.3 ensure control measures are implemented and maintained to reduce the risk of lone working to its lowest reasonably practicable level within their areas of responsibility.

5.4 The Health, Safety & Wellbeing Office will:

- 5.4.1 provide advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy;
- 5.4.2 provide training to support the implementation of this policy;
- 5.4.3 ensure that the effectiveness of the policy is monitored;
- 5.4.4 ensure that the policy is reviewed and revised at least every three years.

5.5 Staff, students and visiting workers who intend to work alone must:

- 5.5.1 ensure the risk assessment for the task to be undertaken permits lone working;
- 5.5.2 ensure they are aware of and understand the control measures to be taken;
- 5.5.3 follow the safe system of work and other control measures;
- 5.5.4 report any incidents occurring whilst working alone, by means of the University's incident reporting system

5.6 Contractors

- 5.6.1 ensure the risk assessment and method statement for the work to be undertaken addresses the risk of lone working;
- 5.6.2 inform the person managing the contract of the lone working risk controls in place for the task;
- 5.6.3 meet the requirements of the University's 'Management of Contractors' Policy.

6. Details of procedure/operational arrangements

6.1 There are some tasks or environments where lone working is not permitted by H&S legislation:

- entry into confined spaces where they may be a risk of asphyxiation
- work near high-voltage conductors or on exposed electrical equipment at dangerous voltages

6.2 Work tasks may be classified into high, medium and low risk categories:

6.2.1 High risk activities – Category 1

In addition to the prohibited activities in Section 6.1 above no person should work alone where there is a serious H&S hazard, eg:

- Work with high power lasers;
- The use of extremely hazardous chemicals where first aid following accidental exposure has to be administered immediately (eg where there is a risk of exposure to hydrogen cyanide, hydrogen fluoride);
- The use of machine tools and equipment which are capable of inflicting serious injury (ie that present risks of entanglement, entrapment, crushing, impact or injury from cutting, shearing, stabbing or puncture);
- One to one meetings with anyone who is believed to be under the influence of drugs, alcohol or whose mental health may increase the level of risk of aggressive behaviour.

A second person should remain within calling distance whenever these acute hazards are present. Undergraduates would not normally be allowed to work on Category 1 activities unless adequate and immediate supervision is provided.

6.2.2 Medium risk activities - Category 2

Lone working risks and control measures must be part of the routine risk assessments for the following activities:

- Work in laboratories involving hazardous substances;
- Work at height using ladders, stepladders, etc;
- Work involving the movement of cash or other valuables;
- Work in the community or work in another employer's premises.

6.2.3 Low risk activities - Category 3

Where there is no hazard involved in the activity, eg, activities such as reading, writing, use of rooms for reference purposes, computer terminals, etc., it is not necessary for a specific risk assessment to be carried out. However the faculty or service responsible for the lone workers must have arrangements in place for knowing who is lone working out-of-hours in their premises in case of emergencies. Lone workers in these situations must also be made aware how to protect their safety:

- in the building,
- when walking to car parks/public transport and □ during emergencies.

6.2.4 Working out of hours

Copies of the signed risk assessment for the task to be undertaken should be issued to the worker. If the risk assessment recommends extra controls for out-of-hours' work, authority to carry out the work (in the form of a permit-to-work or letter signed by the Head of Faculty or Directorate) must be kept available for inspection by security. The authorisation should include a description of the work approved to be carried out, details of locations where the work is to be undertaken, permitted activities and any specific precautions required.

6.2.5 Students undertaking final year projects

Students undertaking practical/experimental final year projects are considered mature enough to work without immediate supervision. Nonetheless, before commencing any laboratory or workshop based activity the student must report to the appropriate member of academic staff, the technician supervisor, or his nominee. Before allowing the programme of work to commence the appropriate member of academic staff, technician supervisor, or his nominee must brief the students and ensure that the student is competent to handle the particular experimental or practical situation.

6.2.6 Risk Assessment

The risk assessment process involves identifying the hazards present in a task or environment, considering who might be harmed by the hazards and how this harm could occur. The assessor must then consider whether the risk controls in place to reduce the risk to as low a level as is reasonably practicable are sufficient or whether more needs to be done.

The factors and hazards to consider during a lone working risk assessment may include:

- Does the workplace or location present a particular / significant risk to the lone worker?
- Is there safe access and egress for the lone worker?
- Will the work involve / require any access equipment or work at height?
- Will the work involve the use of plant / equipment or mechanical handling equipment?
- Will the work involve the use of hazardous substances?
- Will the work involve any manual handling operations?
- Is there a risk of violence or aggression?
- Are women especially at risk if they are working alone?
- Are young workers / students especially at risk if they work alone?
- Does the work involve access / contact with animals?
- Will the work require access to restricted areas, containment areas, zones or confined spaces?
- Will the work involve radiation sources or lasers?
- Will the work involve naked flames, heat, smoke or fire?
- Will the work involve gas, electricity or water?
- Will the work involve hand tools, sharps, needles or glass?
- Will the work involve compressed gases and or air?
- Will the work involve access to dangerous moving parts etc?
- Are any particular individuals at risk eg, those at increased risk due to a medical condition or disability?

The risk controls to adopt to reduce the risk of lone working may include:

- Information, training and competency
 - All lone workers should be aware of the risks they may be exposed to and the findings of the risk assessment should be shared.
 - All lone workers who are the responsibility of the University must be trained to be able to work safely without direct supervision.
 - Contractors should be made aware of the lone working arrangements of the University. Their competence to work safely without direct supervision and their employer's lone working risk control arrangements should be confirmed by the person managing the contracted work.

- Written procedures / local rules
- Additional specific information
- Permit to work / safe system of work
- Fire safety precautions / arrangements
- First Aid arrangements
- Access / egress arrangements
- Zoned / restricted area / access
- Elimination / substitution of hazardous substances / materials
- Equipment guarding and emergency controls
- Security arrangements
- Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Supervision and monitoring arrangements:
 - periodic contact with lone workers;
 - periodic site visits to lone workers; ○ regular contact (telephone, radio, etc); ○ automatic warning sensors – eg ‘man-down’ or motion sensors; ○ manual warning devices – eg panic alarms; ○ end of task or shift contact and appropriate, tested escalation procedures.

7. Monitoring & review

7.1 The implementation and effectiveness of this policy will be monitored by the University’s Health, Safety & Environment Committee. This will be done through a number of indicators:

- faculty and directorate annual returns
- incident and accident statistics
- inspection
- audit

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the HSWO or after a reported significant lone working incident.

7.2 Heads of Faculty and Directors will monitor risk assessments and control measures through their Health & Safety Committees. Any problems highlighted should be brought to the attention of the University’s Health, Safety and Wellbeing Office who will then inform the Health, Safety & Environment Committee.

8. References/Related Documents

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
HSE (2009) Working Alone (INDG73)