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Are your Lone Working Policies and Procedures Up-to-Date?

As we all begin to take tentative steps towards a return to the workplace, it is an opportune time for organisations to review their health and safety arrangements.

While the obvious focus will be on a return to fixed location workplaces, it is also important to review your arrangements for employees who work away from the workplace, remote workers and, more importantly, those classed as lone workers.

What is the definition of a lone worker?

Lone workers are defined as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. This includes employees in fixed establishments and those:

- › Working outside normal hours e.g. property maintenance operatives and security
- › Working alone in premises e.g. caretakers, cleaners, support workers etc
- › Working separately from others e.g. landscape operatives and surveyors
- › Remote working or agile workers e.g. property managers visiting clients at their premises or estate agents.

Risks of accidents, ill health and personal security are all common issues that lone workers are exposed to. On 3 May 2021, Suzy Lamplugh would have turned 60 – a timely reminder of the importance of assessing lone working and personal safety risks. Suzy was an estate agent who went missing in 1986 and has never been seen since, having left her place of work to show a property to a potential buyer who turned out to have provided a fictitious name.

What health and safety risks need to be considered for lone workers?

The same health and safety considerations should be taken

into account for lone workers as for those employees who are permanently based at their place of work. Do you have a risk assessment in place, and has it been shared with lone workers, their colleagues and managers? Are all employees aware of the procedures and protocols to be followed? Simply having a mobile phone is not enough – you should strongly consider the use of apps, alongside training in conflict resolution and personal safety for those who may be at risk.

We practice fire drills every year and also review our business continuity arrangements, but when was the last time you checked your lone worker arrangements to

ensure that they still worked? Emergency contacts may no longer be employed and phone numbers may have changed, so it is important that you take lone working arrangements seriously and submit them to regular review. Do not wait for an incident – be proactive and review your lone worker arrangements now.

Following on from your risk assessment, you will also need to produce a lone working policy. This is a guide that will set out your company's rules on working alone, helping your employees to understand the risks associated with their role. It should also provide them with practical advice and instructions on how to safely work alone.

How can SOCOTEC help?

SOCOTEC can support your organisation with its lone working policies and arrangements, offering a range of training options and consultancy support, including our [Lone Working training course](#).

[Click here](#) to view SOCOTEC's take on the latest updates to the HSE's lone working policies and legislation. You can also get in touch with our Health & Safety Consultancy [here](#).