

# Hull York Medical School

## Code of Practice on Working Alone

Approved by HUPOG January 2005

### 1.0 Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive define lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For the purposes of this guidance lone workers are considered as those undertaking solitary work out of sight and hearing range of someone who could assist directly in the event of an accident or illness. Lone working in the course of work for HYMS whether on its premises or off campus, such as during placements and home working are addressed by this guidance. The employer is responsible for conducting risk assessments in all these work situations.

### 2.0 Risk assessment

The Dean is required to ensure that the risks of lone working are assessed and recorded ahead of the work starting. The likelihood and consequence of foreseeable accidents needs to be considered and adequate controls and emergency arrangements need to be implemented.

Individuals working on their own, particularly at unsocial hours and in remote locations, are likely to be unable to obtain prompt emergency aid due to the absence of other persons close at hand. Working alone is generally not more risky with regards to undertaking work, but in the event of an injury, accident or other incident the lone worker is more likely to remain unattended for a significant time.

Lone working must not be undertaken if it is reasonably foreseeable that an accident would be sufficiently serious that a second person needs to be present to respond. The following are examples where lone working should normally be prohibited:

- Entry into Confined Spaces
- Use of ladders where the height of the ladder is such that footing by a second person is required and the ladder cannot be adequately secured
- Erection of scaffolding
- Use of dangerous machines where there is a risk of entanglement, entrapment, crushing, impact or injury from cutting or shearing, stabbing or puncture
- Work on or near live electrical conductors
- Work in laboratories involving flammable fluids, asphyxiants, toxic and corrosive substances

The risk factors that need to be assessed include:

- Suitability of the individual (physical, mental and work experience) to work alone
- Nature and condition of any equipment, tools or items to be handled
- Presence and handling of dangerous substances, e.g. substances subject to COSHH Regulations (harmful to health), DSEAR Regulations (flammable, explosive), cryogenic and radioactive materials
- Work environment – remoteness, effect of weather conditions for external tasks, possible unprovoked violence due to presence of unwanted persons
- Emergency arrangements, particularly the summoning of assistance for first aid
- Communication systems – use of mobile telephone, pager, two-way radio etc.

### **3.0 Person's suitability**

The medical condition of the individual including any disability, however minor such as impaired hearing or sight, may rule out lone working. The ability of the individual to deal with foreseeable injury accidents, fire and periods of personal isolation needs to be assessed.

### **4.0 Machinery, equipment, materials or handled Items**

Particular attention needs to be given to work involving dangerous machines, electrical safety, hazardous and dangerous substances and manual handling.

### **5.0 Environment**

Safe access to the work area is important so that adequate illumination is provided day and night. The security arrangements to control the possible access of unwanted persons needs to be considered. The remoteness of the work area may be such that emergency response would be unacceptably delayed.

### **6.0 Emergency**

Where emergency facilities are inaccessible, for example working in remote locations, lone workers should be trained to use and be provided with a first aid kit.

In certain situations, the use of personal alarms may be appropriate.

### **7.0 Communications**

The lone worker may wish to report to a supervisor or designated responsible person such as security staff on a regular basis to confirm his/her well being. This could be done using an internal phone, mobile phone or pager at regular intervals or at an agreed frequency that is varied according to the risk of particular tasks. Such arrangements provide a means to summon aid in an emergency.

### **8.0 Supervision**

Although lone workers cannot be constantly supervised, there is a duty on the School to provide appropriate control of the work. In addition information, training and instruction needs to be provided to ensure the risks are understood by the lone worker and the necessary safety precautions are carried out.

### **9.0 Procedure for working alone outside normal office hours in HYMS buildings**

- 9.1 Only 'office' type work may be undertaken outside normal office hours. Access to HYMS laboratories is restricted outside normal office hours.
- 9.2 Individuals intending to work alone outside normal office hours are advised to ensure someone else knows where they are and approximately what time they are expected to return. Alternatively, lone workers may advise the appropriate University office (ext 3300 at the University of York, ext 6868 at the University of Hull) that they are working alone
- 9.3 Any individual with a medical condition or disability that may affect their suitability to work alone outside normal office hours must contact the HYMS or University Health and Safety Officer to arrange a risk assessment before working alone outside normal office hours.

Adapted from  
[www.bathspa.ac.uk/departments/health-and-safety/2-monitoring/2-19-lone-working.asp](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/departments/health-and-safety/2-monitoring/2-19-lone-working.asp)  
January 2005