FAST FACT, REF FF:013:02

HSE POLICY AND GUIDANCE ON LONE WORKING 2022

FAST FACTS *provide a brief overview of various health and safety topics to support our managers, employees, safety representatives and others. Why not bring this to your Safety Committees/Departmental Meeting for discussion? Additional information is available by visiting our website at: https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/health-and-safety/*

This FAST FACT provides a brief overview of the **HSE Policy and Guidance on Lone Working 2022.** The policy can be downloaded here.

DID YOU KNOW THAT Employees who work alone face the same hazards in their daily work as other employees, however, for lone workers the risk of harm is often greater if there is no-one there to help if something goes wrong or if the person suffers a sudden illness. Some of the risks which lone workers may face include:

- Threats, aggression and violence
- Inadequate hygiene and welfare facilities
- Effects of social isolation
- Sudden illness/emergencies
- Lack of immediate support and assistance

DEFINITION(S) (AS PER POLICY)

Lone Working described as 'any situation, or location, in which someone works without close or direct supervision; without a colleague nearby, or is out of sight or earshot of another colleague'.

Lone Worker describes 'those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision'.

Environments and situations where personnel may work alone include:

- Lone working staff within premises e.g. treatment room, reception area, laboratory, office in remote parts of premises.
- Lone working staff working away from their fixed base or who travel in the course of their work e.g. group education, domiciliary visits.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The HSE acknowledges that some employees are required to work alone in a diverse range of environments and in this regard, it is the policy of the HSE to ensure the safety of lone workers by minimising the related risk and putting in place appropriate measures to improve their safety.

PURPOSE

- To raise awareness of the risks presented by lone working to managers and employees.
- Provide a framework to support managers in managing lone working activities in consultation with their employees.
- To provide evidence based guidance on minimising the risk associated with lone working activities. These risk reduction measures are outlined in Section 5, Part A of the Policy.
- To outline the responsibilities each employee has in relation to their role as a lone worker.

SCOPE

This Policy applies to all HSE employees, fixed term employees and temporary employees whose work is intended to be carried out:

- Unaccompanied or
- Without immediate access to another person for assistance.

In line with the *HSE Code of Governance (2021)* Section 38 and Section 39 organisations are to adopt this policy or develop a policy of their own which is consistent with this policy and provide an assurance to the HSE regarding same.

KEY HEALTH AND LEGISLATION

- Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005
- Safety Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations, 2007

MANAGER'S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Ensure risk assessments (to include the identification of lone workers) for their area of responsibility are completed and reviewed in consultation with employees and appropriate measures to eliminate, minimise or control the risk implemented.
- Establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done whilst working alone and where appropriate, when to stop and seek advice.
- Ensure a clear and robust response protocol is in place in the event of activation of a lone worker device / incident and ensure this response protocol is tested periodically to confirm it is working effectively
- Ensure that lone workers receive information, instruction, and training relevant to their role.

EMPLOYEE'S KEY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Adhere to and apply this Policy and any other relevant HSE policies/circulars, local procedures and safe systems of work and any associated risk assessments and controls.
- Report any matters of concern in relation to lone working defects in equipment at the place of work and any unsafe systems of work to the line manager.
- Comply with any safety measures (e.g. lone worker systems/devices, buddy system etc.), that have been introduced
- Conduct dynamic risk assessments

Detailed Roles and Responsibilities are detailed in the HSE Policy and Guidance on Lone Working 2022.

DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT

It is recognised that situations can change rapidly and the associated risks can also change. In these situations employees have to make operational decisions based on risks which cannot necessarily be foreseen e.g. a person under the influence of drink or drugs, a hostile dog, escorting a patient alone. This process is referred to as a dynamic risk assessment and involves being alert to warning signs and body language. Being aware of entrances and exits and making a judgement as to the best possible course of action - for example, whether to continue working or withdraw.

A suite of ***personal safety measures*** for lone workers is provided in Appendix VA, VIA and VIIA in Part A of the Policy.

RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS

To undertake a risk assessment, it is important to understand what in the workplace could cause harm to lone workers which includes the work activities, work environment and use of work equipment /substances. The lone working risk assessment can be used to cover a whole service or for an individual member of staff.

The General Risk Assessment form CF:005 can be downloaded here.

The risk assessment process for a given task comprises of the following **FOUR STEPS** which are detailed in Section 2.0, Part A of the Policy:

Step 1 - Identify the **Hazard** associated with the work activity

Step 2 - Identify the **Risks** associated with the hazard

Step 3 - **Assess** and Rate the Risk

Step 4 - Identify any **additional control measures**.

General Risk Assessment Form				
Division:		Source of Risk:		
HG/CHO/NAS/Function:		Primary Impact Category:		
Hospital Site/Service:		Risk Type:		
Dept/Service Site:		Name of Risk Owner (BLOCKS):		
Date of Assessment:		Signature of Risk Owner:		
Unique ID No:		Risk Co-Ordinator:		
		*Risk Assessor (s):		
**HAZARD & RISK DESCRIPTION	EXISTING CONTROL MEASURES	ADDITIONAL CONTROLS REQUIRED	ACTION OWNER (i.e. the Person responsible for the action)	DUE DATE
INITIAL RISK			Risk Status		
Likelihood	Impact	Initial Risk Rating	Open	Monitor	Closed

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- Health and Safety Authority Guidance on Lone Working in the Healthcare Sector. Available here.