LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Guidance for Lone Working

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LANCASTER UNIVERSITY GUIDANCE ON LONE WORKING

This guidance is provided to assist staff in assessing any additional or increased hazards associated with an individual who is a ‘lone worker’. This is anyone who works by themselves without close or direct supervision.

The principal aim of the guidance is to ensure that the decision to permit lone working has been reached through undertaking a suitable and sufficient risk assessment using the hierarchy of controls to justify the decision and to determine any additional controls that may be needed. The responsibility for authorising the risk assessment belongs to the person who is responsible for the work being carried out e.g. principal investigator, manager or supervisor.

Those authorising Lone Working must consider the significant risks posed by the activity being undertaken within the definition of Lone Working outlined below.

Where the circumstances increase the hazards to the lone worker the existing risk assessment should be modified or a separate risk assessment should be produced. Permission to undertake lone working should only be granted upon the submission of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment or on a demonstration that no additional significant risks arise from the lone working.

Existing emergency protocols should be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of risk.
**DEFINITION OF LONE WORKING**
A lone worker is someone who carries out their work activities by themselves without close or direct supervision.

In practical terms, persons are considered to be lone workers if they have neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon assistance in the event of an accident or illness.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the University’s Guidance on Safety in Fieldwork which offers detailed practical guidance.

**PROHIBITION**
Lone working must be prohibited in the following activities:

- working in a confined space;
- electrical work involving manipulation of live, uninsulated power conductors using insulated tools;
- other electrical work where at least 2 people are sometimes required

**ACTIVITIES FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION**
High risk activities that require specific attention when planning safe lone working arrangements include working with:

- Chemicals, particularly corrosive, toxic, explosive, flammable, asphyxiating, or narcotic substances, products or reactions
- Cryogenic substances
- Class 3B/4 lasers where the beam is not fully enclosed
- Power tools and machinery
- Working on or near water
- Working at height

**RISK ASSESSMENT**

- There is no specific regulation that directly relates to Lone Working. The arrangements for safe working in any situation fall within the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. This regulation requires that a suitable and sufficient Risk Assessment is carried out and adequate controls are in place. The manager/supervisor [principal investigator] is responsible for ensuring that this happens.

- The University’s Risk Assessment process requires the assessor to apply the hierarchy of controls. The first of these is to eliminate the risk completely which must be the first consideration for Lone Working if at all possible.

- It is expected that the risk assessment process is undertaken as a collaborative exercise by both the lone worker and their manager/supervisor [principal investigator] and that the
agreed safe working procedures are recorded and communicated to all persons who may be required to work alone and any other employees who have a role to play in ensuring their safety.

**DOES LONE WORKING ENHANCE THE RISK?**

If lone working is being considered then a review of the current risk assessment is the starting point.

It is important to stress that only significant risks must be controlled. Where normal working practices do not pose significant risks the assessor should consider whether by undertaking the task as a lone worker it will increase the risk to the individual. To do this the assessor should consider the following categories;

- **Workplace**: does the area where the lone working will take place introduce any significant hazards? For example will it be properly lit throughout the period of the work, is there other equipment in the area that could pose a hazard, will emergency exits be available, could the lone worker be vulnerable to violence during the work or when travelling to or from the workplace?
- **Task**: is there anything about the task that means carrying it out as a lone worker is not appropriate. For example are there any accident scenarios that would require others to respond – if so how will you arrange this?
- **Individual**: consider the individual carrying out the lone working. For example, do they have the necessary experience, are they medically vulnerable? Consider any disability requiring a reasonable adjustment or whether the individual may be particularly vulnerable to harassment.
ARE INCREASED CONTROLS REQUIRED?
If you identify additional risks you will need to determine appropriate controls. Lone workers should not be put at a greater risk than others. You need to record any additional controls that you think are appropriate in your risk assessment.

When deciding on the controls you should consider the following:

- a system of checking in and out
- the development of an enhanced emergency procedure and response
- additional training for the individuals and those expected to support them
- the use of technology to monitor
- additional levels of first aid equipment and protocols

APPROVAL TO CARRY OUT LONE WORKING
Departments must develop their own approval route for permitting lone working for staff and students.

The approval route must include a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and sign off procedure. It would be appropriate to include the Head of Department and/or their competent nominee in such a process.

Where enhanced emergency procedures and response form part of the additional controls, University Security must be included in their development.