



LONE WORKING

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1 Introduction

Whilst at European level there is no specific legislation addressing lone working, the general obligations on employers under the worker safety directive, requiring task risk assessment, should consider the lone working aspects.

This publication describes and discusses tasks specific to the industrial and medical gases industry and how they can be performed safely, by a lone worker.

2 Scope and purpose

2.1 Scope

The publication introduces the concept of lone working and outlines the employer's obligations to provide safe systems of work.

Normal office activities, business travel, driving cars, trucks and other vehicles on public roads are all outside the scope of this publication.

Service technicians, engineers and delivery drivers will typically attend customer sites alone, possibly on call or out of hours, to respond to equipment issues. The gas company will not be in direct control of the work area so a risk assessment should be documented including lone work aspects.

2.2 Purpose

Generally lone working situations should be avoided where possible.

This publication shares good practices and principles that should be applied where lone working activities are necessary. This publication provides examples of tasks that may be performed by lone workers so that companies can identify lone work tasks and implement safe systems of work.

3 Definitions

For the purpose of this publication, the following definitions apply.

3.1 Publication terminology

3.1.1 Shall

Indicates that the procedure is mandatory. It is used wherever the criterion for conformance to specific recommendations allows no deviation.

3.1.2 Should

Indicates that a procedure is recommended.

3.1.3 May

Indicates that the procedure is optional.

3.1.4 Will

Is used only to indicate the future, not a degree of requirement.

3.1.5 Can

Indicates a possibility or ability.

3.2 Technical definitions

3.2.1 Forbidden

In this document “forbidden” is used as a succinct synonym for “shall not” (refer also to 3.1)

3.2.2 Person working alone

Someone who is on company premises or carrying out company business at a third-party location and who is **not in frequent visual or verbal contact with other persons** (for example other employees, contractors, customer personnel or members of the general public).

3.2.3 Lone Worker

A person who is working alone **and** is exposed to hazards either because of the tasks they perform or from the workplace.

3.2.4 Lone Work

A task or activity when performed by a lone worker.

3.2.5 Risk assessment

A systematic procedure for identifying and managing hazards. It encompasses thorough examination of the entire work environment, processes and equipment to determine any hazard to the health of the employees in the short or long term and implementing remedies.

3.2.6 Lone Work Risk assessment

Recognises the additional factors if the person is or may be working alone. Lone work hazards could be included in the normal task risk assessment, or it could be documented as a specific task risk assessment, especially recognising where the work locations are not in the control of the employer.

3.2.7 Dead man's handle/switch

A device (switch, push button, knob, handle, paddle) which requires continuous pressure from a person to confirm ongoing safe operation. If the person becomes unconscious or dies, then the body relaxes, and the system will be shutdown. The person can also choose to release the switch to interrupt operation.

There are variants which require a worker to press the switch intermittently to confirm ongoing safe operation and that the worker remains near to the operation. If the switch is not pressed within the prescribed time, for any reason the operation will stop.

3.2.8 Man down system

A device (usually incorporating a tilt switch) which registers movement. When person stops moving, for example if they are unconscious or asleep, the device will send a communication to a pre-defined call centre. Man down systems can be incorporated into smartphones, personal gas monitors, and some include global positioning functions.

Man down systems are an example of automated personal safety systems.

4 Lone working introduction

Companies shall provide a safe work environment through a combination of policies, procedures, practices, training, and engineering controls. The risks to lone workers shall be managed. Providing a safe working environment for lone workers may include additional factors compared to managing the health and safety of other employees.