

LONE WORKERS AND HOME WORKERS

Working alone can bring additional risks to an employee's normal working environment. It is important that if you have employees who work alone that you, as their employer, are fully aware of all the hazards and risks to which they could be exposed. It is essential that the employer has undertaken an appropriate risk assessment, that the employees are aware of the results of the risk assessment and are also aware of what actions that need to be taken if they find themselves working alone, and who they should contact if something goes wrong. It is important that your organisation's Line Manager is aware of their whereabouts at all times and what activities their employees are undertaking.

Health and Safety Legislation, specifically the management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999, requires an employer to undertake a risk assessment to ensure that employees who are working alone are working safely. The risk assessment must review means of entry to the workplace and means of leaving the workplace, the equipment that may be required to be used, the exact tasks required to be undertaken, any substances that are required to be handled, the environment and atmosphere in which individuals are working and any people or clients with whom interaction is required.

Particular consideration must be given to the following:-

- The remoteness or isolation of the workplace;
- Any problems with communication;
- The mode of communication – whether electronic, visual or oral;
- The possibility of interference, such as violence or criminal activity from other people;
- The nature of any particular potential injury or damage to health that could be anticipated.

It is extremely important that employees are made aware of the correct safe working practices and that these are followed at all times. This should include, where necessary, the provision of first aid, communication procedures and the awareness of emergency protocols. Further, it is important that employees are made aware of their responsibilities to co-operate with the employers' efforts to ensure the safety of specific employees and that of their colleagues and the general public.

If an employee is required to work alone, the employer must ensure that they are fit to do so, both psychologically and physically. An employee must not feel frightened, they should be confident with regards to the equipment that they have been given and able to work within the environment provided; for example the appropriate lighting, heating, etc. The employee should be able to summon help, raise the alarm, be aware of the location of a first aid kit, fire fighting equipment and rescue equipment at all times. A trainee or new recruit must be confirmed as

competent to work alone before supervision is relaxed. This competence must be assessed by the Line Manager and documented.

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In certain circumstances, particularly where the risks are considered high or where specific legal requirements exist, you as the employer may wish to consider a system of permits to work. Such a system will record health, fitness, training and competence. If specific consideration is given to a particular environment and the wearing of personal protective equipment, finishing times or maximum exposure times, these must not be disregarded. Any equipment issued must be recorded appropriately, and employees must undergo the appropriate training and be aware of their responsibilities to store and maintain the personal protective equipment to the required standards.

The requirements for individual employees to work alone is becoming increasingly common, as information technology and communication facilities improve and develop and the modern working environment requires employees to be more mobile and responsive to client needs. These issues are seen both in the public and the private sector throughout both manufacturing and service industries. 'Home workers' are often 'lone workers' and their working environment has to be managed appropriately and risk assessed.

Such change in the working environment is likely to expand and develop further and will require the appropriate occupational health and health and safety responses.

If you have any further questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact a member of our PHC staff either for your occupational health enquiries or health and safety requirements.

Visit us at: www.phcohealth.com

Email General Enquiries to: talk2us@phcohealth.co.uk

