

St Michael and All Angels

H&S Policy and Procedure

Working Alone and Personal Safety

POLICY

The aim of this policy is to increase awareness of safety issues relating to lone working and to ensure the risks of lone working are assessed in a systematic and ongoing way and that safe systems and methods of work are put in place to reduce such risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

It is intended to alert employees and voluntary helpers to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in such situations and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks.

INFORMATION

Introduction

Although there is no general legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 (HSW Act) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work (MHSW) Regulations 1999 still apply. These require identifying hazards of the work, assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.

The general duties of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the more specific duties of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require the PCC to provide a safe environment, safe equipment and safe systems of work for its employees, voluntary helpers and others working on its premises. These requirements are applicable to all work situations and the PCC recognises its duty to assess risks to lone workers and to take steps to avoid or control risks where necessary.

This Policy & Procedure contains generic guidance to assist with identifying, through a risk assessment process, the potential risks of those tasks which may be undertaken by a lone worker. The policy is intended to clarify responsibilities and to identify the 'best practice' in relation to lone working

Scope

This policy is applicable to all employees and voluntary helpers and, where appropriate, contractors and applies to all situations involving lone working.

Definitions

Lone workers are those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Lone working can occur during normal working hours at an isolated location within the normal workplace or when working outside normal working hours. Lone working is found in a wide range of situations, including:

- People in fixed establishments e.g. a) only one person works on the premises; b) people work separately from others; c) people work outside normal hours
- Mobile workers working away from their fixed base

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Risk Assessment Process

Employees and voluntary workers who work alone face the same hazards as others but for lone workers the risk of harm is often greater. Therefore, a robust risk assessment process is essential to effective risk management.

The PCC will ensure that all lone working activities are formally identified and appropriate risk assessments undertaken in order to identify the risks to lone workers and the control measure necessary to minimise these risks, as far as reasonably practicable. The multi-stage risk management process will entail:

- Identifying all persons who are lone workers.
- Identifying the locations of lone working and the tasks being carried out
- Undertaking a suitable risk assessment to identify the hazards and level of risk to which each lone worker is exposed
- Identifying, prioritising and implementing suitable control measures where required.

The risk assessment process will ensure consideration is given to the following issues:

- a) Can the risks of the task be adequately controlled by one person?
 - Does the workplace or private home present a special risk to the lone worker? e.g. are there likely to be animals present?
 - Is there a safe way in and a way out for one person?
 - Can the equipment necessary for the task be safely handled by one person?
 - Can any lifting be safely carried out by one person?
 - Is there a risk of violence?
 - Are women especially at risk working alone?
- b) Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone?
 - Both routine work and foreseeable emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual. Voluntary helpers will, therefore, be encouraged to volunteer information regarding any medical condition which may make them unsuitable for working alone.
- c) What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters?
 - Risks and precautions fully and will be given guidance regarding the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone. This will ensure lone workers are able to deal with unforeseen circumstances.
- d) What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or there is an emergency?
 - The risk assessment will identify foreseeable events and lone workers will be provided with information regarding the emergency procedures established to enable them to respond correctly to emergencies.
 - Voluntary helpers involved in 'lone working' situations will be encouraged to implement a system of checks (with family, friends or neighbours) that they have returned to their home on completion of the task.

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Safe Systems of Work

The control measures implemented will be appropriate to the nature of the lone working and the level of risk involved and may include training, supervision, protective equipment etc. The risk control measures will take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents.

When a risk assessment shows that that it is not possible for the work to be done safely by a lone worker, arrangements for providing help or back-up should be put in place. When help or back-up cannot be provided for high risk activities or locations then lone working should not be permitted.

All lone-workers will be given written guidance on the risks involved and the precautions required, together with details of a named contact who will provide any additional advice/guidance necessary.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all employees and voluntary helpers to undertake all lone working in accordance with the findings of the appropriate risk assessment, to comply with any information and training provided and to immediately report any problems or concerns.

Personal Safety Guidance for Working Alone

The following general guidance on personal safety is provided for the benefit of employees and voluntary helpers who work alone:

- Know what the contact arrangements are and who to contact in an emergency
- Be aware of who is, and what is happening, around you at all times
- Consider implementing a system of checks (with family, friends or neighbours) by notifying them of intended destination and expected duration away
- Consider carrying a mobile telephone (ensure it is fully-charged and 'pay-as-you-go' systems have sufficient credit)
- When appropriate, keep to well-lit public areas
- Keep valuables out of site in a vehicle – put them in the boot before arriving at the location
- Reverse into parking spaces so it is quick and easy to leave
- If intimidated whilst driving, continue to the nearest police station or public area, such as a filling station
- Know the destination and route to be taken, with an alternative in the event of delays or problems

More detailed personal safety guidance for specific 'lone working' situations is given at Appendix 1.

References

Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 – Approved Code of Practice & Guidance L21 (HSE Books ISBN 0-7176-2488-9)

Working Alone in Safety INDG73 (HSE Books)

Personal Safety Advice Factsheet (National Churchwatch)

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Appendix 1 – Personal Safety Guidance for Working Alone

1. Use of Public Transport

- Where possible wait for transport at a busy stop or station that is well lit
- Try and sit near the driver of the vehicle or in an aisle seat
- Familiarise yourself with the emergency alarm on the vehicle and sit near it
- Avoid empty upper decks on buses or empty train compartments
- If threatened by other passengers inform the driver or guard

2. Use of Vehicles

- Do not use the vehicle if you think it may be in need of repair
- Always check the vehicle has sufficient fuel to complete the journey
- Only carry in the vehicle that which is absolutely necessary
- Never leave anything of value on view in the vehicle e.g. bags, cases, CDs or other equipment
- Keep bags out of site when driving, especially if the windows are open
- When walking to or from the vehicle, keep the keys in your hand or pocket in order to avoid the need to look for them before getting in
- Check there is no one in or around the vehicle before getting in
- Once inside the vehicle all doors should be locked, especially when travelling in towns, at low speeds or when stopped at traffic lights
- Always try and park as close as possible to your intended destination
- Whenever possible, avoid parking in multi-storey car parks, back streets, cul-de-sacs or open country areas
- Wherever possible, especially at night, park in open, well-lit and well used public areas at street level facing the direction in which you plan to leave
- Keep loose change, a 'phone card or a mobile 'phone in case you need to make a call
- If travelling alone, especially after dark, do not stop for other people, even those who may in distress or requiring help. Stop as soon as it is practicable and safe to do so and contact the emergency services as appropriate
- If followed, or if in doubt as to whether you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station or manned and well-lit building e.g. a petrol station to request assistance
- Use the vehicle horn to attract attention or help if needed
- In the event of a breakdown, where it is safe to do so, stay in the vehicle, switch on the hazard lights and call for assistance

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3. Cycling

- Avoid unlit areas and quiet roads
- Secure bicycle near premises in a well-lit area if possible
- Always carry the bicycle lock keys in your hand or pocket in order to avoid the need to look for them outside
- Fit and use front and rear lights when dark
- Avoid making repairs to the bicycle in isolated or poorly lit areas. Where possible push the bicycle to the nearest safe place e.g. petrol station, guarded car park in order to carry out repairs
- If someone attempts to steal the bicycle, relinquish the property immediately without challenge

4. Travelling on Foot

- Plan the route beforehand to avoid going through underpasses or taking shortcuts through areas which may be less safe e.g. parks, especially after dark
- If possible and physically able to do so, walk briskly and do not stop in unfamiliar areas to, for example, look at a map or ask directions. Instead go to a 'safe' place such as a petrol station or shop and ask directions
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts. Cross the street if you are still being followed and head for a busy area
- Avoid using mobile 'phones overtly. If it is necessary to use your 'phone or respond to a call/text message, where possible do so in a safe place e.g. a shop
- Remain alert to people around you and stay in the centre of the footpath facing oncoming traffic
- Hold bags under your arm with the clasp close to your body. Do not wear rucksacks over your shoulders as they make it easier to be pulled to the ground
- Don't wear 'Walkmans' or 'ipods'. Always be aware of your surroundings and make sure you can hear if someone is behind you or shouting to you
- If someone attempts to steal your belongings relinquish the property immediately without challenge. Property can be replaced – you cannot!
- Consider keeping your house keys and mobile 'phone separate from your handbag
- Wear sensible low-heeled footwear with non-slip soles
- Where possible, avoid overtly displaying valuables on your person e.g. jewellery or 'ipods'
- Try not to stop at cash-point machines
- Avoid passing groups/gangs of people who may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Carry a torch at night

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5. Use of Taxis

- Whenever possible, a taxi should be booked in advance from a reputable company. Always make sure the driver knows your name and destination before getting into the vehicle
- If no taxi has been booked go to the office of a reputable company or go to a recognised rank to hail a cab. Never use an unlicensed mini-cab
- Sit in the back behind the driver's seat and have a mobile 'phone readily accessible
- Do not give out personal information to the driver

6. During Home Visits

- Whenever possible, pre-plan the visit and obtain as much information as possible about the person visited and their home environment in advance so that risks can be assessed
- Always be prepared to identify yourself
- Carry out a "10-second risk assessment" on first arriving at the premises and the front door is opened. If you feel there is a risk of harm you should have an excuse ready not to enter the home and make alternative arrangements to visit
- Make sure that when you enter the home you shut the front door behind you and make yourself familiar with the door lock in case you need to make an emergency exit
- Wherever practical, avoid being in a situation where the person you are visiting, or any relative or other person present, is between you and the exit

7. If Animals Are Present

- If there is a known problem with animals at a particular location the person visited should be contacted in advance and requested to remove or secure the animal(s) before arrival.
- If a request to remove or secure an animal has provoked a negative reaction all possible efforts should be made to ensure the situation is managed and deescalated.
- Should hostility become evident alternative arrangements should be made to carry out the visit e.g. is there somebody else more at ease with animals who could do the visit?
- If confronted by an aggressive animal on a first visit you should not put yourself at risk. If necessary abandon the visit and try and make alternative arrangements.