

Lone workers policy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the Brigade's arrangements for lone workers and the management of lone worker safety. It applies to all employees including temporary and part-time, contractors, consultants, agency workers, volunteers and those on secondment to the Brigade.
- 1.2 It is recognised that some staff are required to work by themselves for significant periods of time without close or direct contact with colleagues or supervisors, or in isolated work areas. Risk assessments will be conducted where staff are required to work in these conditions and action taken to eliminate as far as practicable the identified risks associated with being a lone worker.
- 1.3 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Brigade's Health and Safety Policy Statement and its associated Safety Management System (SMS) framework.
- 1.4 This policy should be applied in line with the Brigade's values:
 - Service – We put the public first.
 - Courage – We step up to the challenge.
 - Learning – We listen so that we can improve.
 - Teamwork – We work together and include everyone.
 - Equity – We treat everyone fairly according to their needs.
 - Integrity – We act with honesty.

Lone worker definition

- 1.5 A lone worker is a worker who spends a large percentage of their working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers and without close supervision.

2 Identifying lone workers

- 2.1 A number of staff have roles which may involve some lone working, for example:
 - Those who work alone on Brigade or other premises.
 - Those who work separately from others on the same premises (e.g. security staff) or those who work outside normal hours.
 - Those who mostly work away from a fixed base (e.g. Fire Safety Inspecting Officers).
 - Those who work from home peripatetically (e.g. Petroleum Inspectors).
 - Any other mobile/peripatetic workers (including staff that use vehicles to travel between sites).
- 2.2 Appendix 1 identifies many staff groups who may be exposed to additional risk through lone working and provides examples of occupations in each category – though this is not an exhaustive list.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 Lone working environments present a unique health and safety problem. Although there is no specific legislation for working alone, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 ("Management Regulations") and the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 ("HASWA") require that risks must be assessed and controls put in place.

All staff

3.2 All Brigade staff are responsible for:

- Taking reasonable care to look after their own health and safety and that of other people who may be affected by their actions.
- Co-operating by following Health and Safety rules, policies and procedures related to safe working.
- Using tools and other equipment properly, according to manufacturer's guidance and relevant Health and Safety instructions.
- Reporting all matters that may affect the health and safety of themselves or others (including any dangers they identify or any concerns they might have in respect of working alone) and reporting accidents and injuries in accordance with Policy number 368 - the Health, Safety and Environmental Event Investigation Policy.
- Taking part in any training designed to meet the requirements of this policy.

Line managers

3.3 Line managers are responsible for:

- Bringing the policy to the attention of all staff.
- Ensuring that the findings of the risk assessment and check list processes are carried out, brought to the attention of staff and are reviewed regularly.
- Implementing procedures and safe systems of work which are designed to eliminate or reduce the risks associated with working alone.
- Ensuring that staff groups and individuals that are identified as being at risk are given information, instructions and training where necessary that is appropriate to the situations that they may encounter.
- Providing appropriate support to staff if involved in an incident while working alone.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of preventative measures through a system of reporting, investigating and recording of safety related incidents in accordance with Policy number 368 - the Health, Safety and Environmental Event Investigation Policy.

Health and Safety

3.4 Health and Safety are responsible for providing management with support in completing checklists and risk assessments, developing control measures with local managers and the overall management of the investigation of safety related incidents in accordance with Policy number 368 - the Health, Safety and Environmental Event Investigation Policy.

The Brigade

3.5 The Brigade is responsible for:

- Ensuring arrangements for identifying, evaluating and managing risks associated with lone working are in place.
- Providing resources for implementing the policy.
- Providing a reasonable response to the evaluated risk.
- Providing arrangements to monitor incidents linked to lone working.
- Reviewing the policy to maintain its effectiveness.

4 Assessing risk

- 4.1 The key to safe lone working is the completion of a satisfactory risk assessment and proper implementation of the required controls. Two main questions must be answered:
- Whether work can be done safely by a single person.
 - What arrangements are required to ensure that the risks to lone workers are minimised to as low a level as reasonably practicable.
- 4.2 The risk assessment of the hazards to lone workers should be conducted by their line manager in discussion with the lone worker. If a risk assessment shows that it is not possible for the work to be done safely, other working arrangements must be put in place.
- 4.3 Risk assessments should take account of both normal work and foreseeable emergencies such as fire, illness and injury. The risk assessment process is summarised below, separated into five distinct stages with action points to support effective assessment of the risks involved in lone working.
- 4.4 Risk assessments shall be carried out by line managers and must be recorded for all areas of work where working alone presents an actual or potential risk to staff. The risk assessment will involve identifying all potential hazards and their associated risks specific to the work tasks or activities to be undertaken. Risk assessments should identify who will be affected by the risk and the control measures that are needed to eliminate or reduce the risk to the lowest possible level. Risk assessments should be conducted for each individual lone worker.
- 4.5 Any significant risk must be recorded locally and should be kept with the file appertaining to the particular building or activity so that it is easily accessible to staff. This information should also be included in staff training where relevant and the results of the risk assessment and control measures must be brought to the attention of lone workers as their work and involvement progresses. Please see the Risk Assessment Process on Hotwire in the Health and Safety risk assessment page for the factors to consider when carrying out the risk assessment.
- 4.6 Details of the risk assessment should be recorded and include:
- The extent and nature of the risk.
 - Factors that contribute to the risk including job content and specific tasks and activities.
 - The safe systems of work to be followed and actions to be put in place to eliminate or reduce the risk.
- 4.7 Information from the risk assessment must be passed to staff. Risk assessments will be reviewed and updated annually or sooner should circumstances change.
- 4.8 'On site risk assessments' (these may also be considered as dynamic risk assessments) may need to be made by staff while they are working. Staff are instructed that if they feel that they are exposed to an uncontrolled risk, e.g. a threat from a third party, they should cease the activity and report to their line manager.

5 Managing risk

- 5.1 The risk which lone workers face should be reduced to the lowest level that is reasonably practicable. Using safe systems of work depends largely on local circumstances, and local procedures should be in place to provide specific guidance for staff in relation to lone working and the associated risk reduction.
- 5.2 Anticipated risks which lone workers could face include (but are not limited to) those caused by:
- accidents and emergencies;

- fire;
- inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities;
- violence;
- theft;
- stress, mental health and wellbeing;
- manual handling injuries.

5.3 Lone workers risk assessment templates for external visits, working alone in buildings and a checklist for safe working arrangements are on Hotwire in the Health and Safety Risk Assessment page. Please also refer to Policy number 1005 Supporting health and wellbeing policy for matters relating to staff wellbeing.

Control measures

5.4 As a result of the risk assessment exercise it may be necessary to adopt specific control measures to further develop safe systems of work. The list below offers a range of possible responses:

- Eliminate lone working for high-risk activities.
- Ensuring that the person is suited and competent to work alone.
- Requesting a medical examination to ensure that the person has no medical condition that would prevent or suggest unfitness for working alone, either generally or in the particular location/circumstances (e.g. additional precautions will be necessary if the lone worker is pregnant or nursing).
- Providing instruction on generic and particular hazards.
- Making improvements to security arrangements in Brigade premises.
- Installing security lighting in Brigade parking areas.
- Developing mutual assistance protocols and systems of information sharing with the Metropolitan Police Service at borough level.
- Devising communication systems for sharing information on risk with colleagues in other departments or agencies.
- Conducting pre-inspection (reconnaissance) visits.
- Ensuring that suitable means of transport are available.
- Employing personal protective equipment.
- Providing aids to manual handling where identified by a Manual Handling Risk Assessment.
- Ensuring the availability to first aid training and equipment where its provision is required by the risk assessment.
- Employing an appropriate means of communication (e.g. provision of individual mobile phones for use when working alone).
- Adopting a contact system (including regular checking-in) where appropriate, ensuring there are contingency arrangements in place.
- Arrange transport home for scheduled late working/accompany staff to their vehicles where appropriate.
- Instituting reporting systems to confirm the safe completion of visits and that staff have left safely.
- Instituting emergency procedures when staff fail to call in, etc.
- Employing 'buddying' where new staff are paired with experienced employees.

5.5 The need for a particular control measure will be determined by the level of risk presented by the activity to be undertaken.

5.6 The risk assessment process should enable the line manager to decide upon the correct control measures to employ in all the circumstances (including suggestions from the list above). Health and Safety can provide guidance on appropriate controls to adopt.

- 5.7 Other local arrangements for managing risk should include:
- Service specific guidance for lone workers on how to conduct an 'on site' risk assessment.
 - Identifying circumstances when the cancellation or early termination of visits is allowed for safety reasons.
 - Details of when to stop and get advice or call for assistance.
 - The procedures to be followed in the event of an incident or emergency.
- 5.8 All staff must be familiar with these procedures and specific guidance in relation to the job role or service provided. Further advice and guidance to tackle specific areas may be developed locally. Advice can be obtained from Health and Safety on:
- Lone workers travelling alone on work-related business.
 - Home visits.
 - Working outside normal office hours, etc.
- 5.9 On the rare occasion when an employee has been given authorisation to work late on their own and where they generally do not participate in a duty system which provides a 24-hour service, the member of staff should ensure that they can get home safely. Staff will be required to inform the reception/security desk in the building that they work in of their expected leave time and sign out on leaving.

6 Violence at work

- 6.1 Lone workers, particularly those with a peripatetic remit may be at an increased risk of violence, therefore any risk assessment must consider violence as a risk factor.
- 6.2 The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as "any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work."
- 6.3 It should be remembered that verbal abuse and threats are the most common type of incident and physical attacks are relatively rare.
- 6.4 Risk may vary according to the particular member of staff working alone. Particular risk factors (over and above a generic risk assessment) for women, young employees, ethnic minority staff, for example should be undertaken where necessary and based on local knowledge of the area to be visited.
- 6.5 The Health and Safety Laboratory (HSL) defined a number of key violence risks common to many of the organisations that were surveyed for the Lone Worker Case Studies. The most common risk factors were:
- Alcohol and drug use, by clients and members of the public with whom the lone worker comes into contact. Alcohol and drug use can make people aggressive and their behaviour unpredictable.
 - Geographic locations. Certain areas of towns or cities, e.g. town centres or council estates, were known to have a higher risk of violence.
 - Late evening/early morning work. Working during these times carried an increased risk of violence because there were generally either fewer people around or a greater number of potentially threatening people, perhaps under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - Nature of the job. In some jobs lone workers hold positions of power or authority over customers or clients which can cause resentment and cause people to be more aggressive.
 - Clients or customer behaviour. For a number of reasons, clients or customers can be highly emotional, unpredictable or aggressive.

- Other people or situations encountered whilst doing job. These include members of the public, youths and animals.
 - Travelling, visiting homes and carrying money or equipment.
- 6.6 Local area knowledge and records of previous incidents will assist managers in making assessments. Consultation with local fire station staff should also be considered where home or community visits are undertaken within their catchment area. It is vital that a history of visits is built up to prevent staff being sent into possible dangerous situations.
- 6.7 Staff should be instructed that they must leave if, during the course of their lone working, they feel unsafe in any way. As soon as they have reached a place of safety, they should be required to contact their line manager. If they are unobtainable a call should be made to Resource Management Centre on 020 8555 1200 extension 88111. A formal written report of what has taken place must be completed on return to the worker's work base. This should be filed with the relevant checklist or risk assessment documentation.

7 Staff training

- 7.1 In addition to job related skills training, other training will be based on addressing needs identified through local risk assessment. Advice and guidance on training options is available from Health and Safety in conjunction with the Learning and Professional Department.

8 Reporting and recording

- 8.1 Staff should report all safety events (including verbal abuse plus avoided incidents or 'near misses') to their line manager in accordance with Policy number 368 - the Health, Safety and Environmental Event Investigation Policy.

9 Records

- 9.1 Please send records by email to RecordsServices@london-fire.gov.uk. Records will be kept on your electronic personal record file (e-PRF) and retained in accordance with Policy number 788 - Electronic personal record files (e-PRF) policy. Personal data shall be processed in accordance with Policy number 351 – Data protection and privacy policy.

10 Help and support

- 10.1 Please contact the Wellbeing Team by email to WellbeingTeam@london-fire.gov.uk.
- 10.2 This policy may also be available on request in other alternative accessible formats as set out in Policy number 290 – Guidance note on translation and interpretation. Please contact Communications on extension 30753 and by email to communications.team@london-fire.gov.uk to discuss your needs and options.

Appendix 1 – Identifying lone workers

	Staff group	Example occupations
1	Staff working alone in fixed establishments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security/reception staff • Facilities and maintenance staff • ICT staff
2	Staff working outside normal working hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Investigation Unit • Petroleum staff • Water Office staff • Some inspecting officers • Supervisory officers attending to assess an incident • Other officers dealing with fire safety matters • Office workers working arranged or voluntary overtime.
3	Mobile workers working away from their fixed base or who travel in the course of their work	<p>Most of (2) above plus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement staff • JFIS volunteers and managers • Schools team staff • Brigade vehicle inspectors • Inspecting officers • OSG satellite workers • Home Fire Safety Risk Assessors • Single crewed appliances and support van drivers • Others using vehicles • Brigade photographers
4	Staff who provide services to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement staff • Firefighter outreach staff • JFIS volunteers and managers • Many of (2) and (3) above
5	Staff who regularly work from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote access users

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	30/04/2024	SDIA	L -12/06/2023	HSWIA	13/06/2023	RA	
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Throughout	CHSES replaced with HSS due to a change in the name of the department	05/05/2010
Throughout	Policy reviewed as current, no changes made to the content.	09/02/2011
Page 8 para 11	Reference to Training and Development Department replaced by Training in line with the Top Management Review.	06/07/2011
Page 25	A new SIA date has been added to this policy.	03/12/2013
Page 25	Subjects list and Freedom of Information Act exemptions tables updated.	29/01/2015
Throughout	Reviewed as current with no changes.	21/06/2017
Page 1	Owner title changed from 'Head of Human Resource Management' to 'Assistant Director, People Services'.	17/08/2020
Throughout	'Authority' replaced with 'Brigade' due to the abolition of LFEPA.	
Throughout	Language changed to gender-neutral terms.	
Throughout	Reviewed as current with no changes. SDIA and HSWIA updated.	16/06/2023
Throughout	Introduction consolidated. Risk assessments and checklist removed and added to Hotwire with links.	27/11/2023
Page 2, para 1.4 Page 7, para 9.1 Page 7, para 10.2	Values included. Data protection details added. Access to alternative policy format details added.	12/04/2024
Appendix 1	Section 3 – HR advisors role removed from list.	22/04/2024
Page 9	Equality impact assessment date updated.	30/04/2024
Page 7, para 9.1 Page 7, para 10.1	Records Services details added. Wellbeing team contact details added.	17/05/2024

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Employment	Health and safety at work
Workplace regulations	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification