Who is at risk?

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says lone workers are “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision.”

Three broad groups of workers are at risk: those Working alone on site; working away from base; and homeworkers.

UNISON’s new guide, Working alone: A health and safety guide on lone working for safety representatives, often a catch-all definition: “A worker whose activities involve a large percentage of their working time operating in situations without the benefit of interaction with other workers or without supervision.”

Covered by the law

HSE’s short guide to working alone says: “Although there is no legal prohibition on working alone, the broad duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (MHSW) still apply. The require identifying hazards of the work assessing the risks involved, and putting measures in place to avoid or control the risks.”

The guide adds that safety reps should be consulted: “It is important to talk to employers and their safety representatives as they are a valuable source of information and advice.”

Additional measures

Working together: Eliminating the hazards of working alone, a guide from the Canadian public service union CUPE, says a number of additional safeguards can be used: Buddy systems A second person is assigned to work with the first, because the job cannot be done safely alone. Communications: Telephones and walkie-talkies can be life lines in some cases.

Home alone

Other hazards that may apply - confined space, VDU and other laws, for example.

A second person is as important as audible alarms are available.

Can the risks of the job be adequately overcome by equipment; lack of help if an accident occurs?

Are young workers especially at risk?

Questions HSE says should be answered by employers include: Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person? Is there a risk of violence? Are women especially at risk if they work alone? Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone? Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters? How will the person be supervised? What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or is there an emergency?

UNISON’s guide adds that employers are also under a legal duty to provide: Facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations Welfare under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations Suitable equipment and training in its use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations. RIDDOR duties to record accidents, injuries and violent incidents also apply. For all jobs, the laws that apply to other exposed workers apply to the lone worker - confined spaces, electric shock, VDU and other laws, for example.

Additional measures

Working together: Eliminating the hazards of working alone, a guide from the Canadian public service union CUPE, says a number of additional safeguards can be used: Buddy systems A second person is assigned to work with the first, because the job cannot be done safely alone. Communications: Telephones and walkie-talkies can be life lines in some cases.

Home alone

Other hazards that may apply - confined space, VDU and other laws, for example.

A second person is as important as audible alarms are available.

Can the risks of the job be adequately overcome by equipment; lack of help if an accident occurs?

Are young workers especially at risk?

Questions HSE says should be answered by employers include: Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person? Is there a risk of violence? Are women especially at risk if they work alone? Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone? Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters? How will the person be supervised? What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or is there an emergency?

UNISON’s guide adds that employers are also under a legal duty to provide: Facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations Welfare under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations Suitable equipment and training in its use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations. RIDDOR duties to record accidents, injuries and violent incidents also apply. For all jobs, the laws that apply to other exposed workers apply to the lone worker - confined spaces, electric shock, VDU and other laws, for example.

Additional measures

Working together: Eliminating the hazards of working alone, a guide from the Canadian public service union CUPE, says a number of additional safeguards can be used: Buddy systems A second person is assigned to work with the first, because the job cannot be done safely alone. Communications: Telephones and walkie-talkies can be life lines in some cases.

Home alone

Other hazards that may apply - confined space, VDU and other laws, for example.

A second person is as important as audible alarms are available.

Can the risks of the job be adequately overcome by equipment; lack of help if an accident occurs?

Are young workers especially at risk?

Questions HSE says should be answered by employers include: Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person? Is there a risk of violence? Are women especially at risk if they work alone? Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone? Is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? What training is required to ensure competency in safety matters? How will the person be supervised? What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident, or is there an emergency?

UNISON’s guide adds that employers are also under a legal duty to provide: Facilities for first aid under the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations Welfare under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations Suitable equipment and training in its use under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations. RIDDOR duties to record accidents, injuries and violent incidents also apply. For all jobs, the laws that apply to other exposed workers apply to the lone worker - confined spaces, electric shock, VDU and other laws, for example.