

SAFETY INFORMATION SHEET

WORKING ALONE IN SAFETY

This information sheet is one of a series produced by the LEIA Safety and Environment Committee on topics relevant to the lift and escalator industry. Whilst every effort has been taken in the production of these sheets, it must be acknowledged that they should be read in conjunction with the relevant legislation, codes of practice etc. They should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law but guidance to it.

INTRODUCTION

This guidance is intended for employees identified as ‘Lone Workers,’ i.e. those people who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. Examples are personnel who on behalf of the lift company visit site to carry out maintenance, repairs, surveys, inspections of lifts and escalators, travel to a meeting, or work in Company premises outside normal office hours on their own.

Working alone is not in itself against the law and it will often be safe to do so. However, the law requires employers to consider carefully, by means of Risk Assessment and then deal with, any health and safety risks for people working alone.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employers

Employers have responsibilities for the health, safety and welfare of their employees as well as those affected by the work, e.g. visitors and contractors. It is the employer's duty to assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control risk when necessary.

Responsibilities for ensuring the well being of lone workers by their respective line manager should be identified in the arrangements section of the organisation's Health and Safety Policy. Measures must be adequate as far as is reasonably practicable to ensure the safety of their personnel.

Line Managers of Lone Workers

Line Managers/Supervisors should ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for ensuring the safety of their employees working on sites.

Line Managers/Supervisors should, prior to setting people to work, ensure that:

- The risks associated with lone working have been adequately assessed and any additional control measures necessary are implemented. *The HSE recommend that risk assessments covering lone working should be reviewed regularly or when there has been a significant change in work practice.*
- Lone workers have been consulted and made aware of the arrangements for the work to be done and understand the precautions that they must take. Effective consultation will also help ensure that relevant hazards are identified, and appropriate and proportionate control measures are chosen.

All Line Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that employees under their control understand and follow the Company lone working arrangements. It is good practice to conduct unannounced safety inspections of employees working alone to ensure they are following all the company requirements in terms of safe systems of work.

Employees

Employees have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and to co operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations. This is achieved by complying with any necessary health and safety procedures and by co-operating with their managers and supervisors so they can comply with the health and safety requirements.

This includes liaising where possible with the site representative regarding their presence on site and reporting any situation to their line manager/supervisor, also notifying them of any situation where lone working may cause them to be put at higher risk than other employee.

RISK ASSESSMENT

When a lone working situation exists, a risk assessment must be carried out to ensure that the person working alone can work safely with the measures in place to adequately protect from the risks associated with the activity.

The risk assessment should pay particular attention to the following issues:

The Task:

- Can the risks of the job be adequately controlled by one person?
 - Consider the requirements of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness, accidents, and any rescue requirements.
- Can all the equipment and materials involved in the work be safely handled by one person?
- Does the work involve lifting objects too large for one person?

The Place of Work:

- Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker, e.g. due to the remoteness or isolation, communication difficulties or the hazards present?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Is there a risk of violence?

The Person:

- Check that lone workers have no medical conditions, which make them unsuitable for working alone. Employers should seek medical advice if necessary. Both routine and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional physical and mental burdens on an individual must be considered.
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?

- Are young workers *or trainees* especially at risk if they work alone?
- Is the person's training and experience adequate to ensure competency in safety matters?
 - Training may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations.
 - Lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and to understand the risks and necessary precautions fully.
- *Where the person's first language is not English, are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communication – especially should an emergency arise.*

TASKS UNSUITABLE FOR WORKING ALONE

A risk assessment must be undertaken prior to work commencing. Any significant site conditions not identified in the assessment affecting health and safety will need to be addressed.

Where the assessment may identify a condition or a situation which shows it is not possible for the work to be done safely alone, lone working should not be permitted and arrangements for providing assistance must be put in place. This assistance may be provided for periods to address the tasks deemed to be unsuitable for lone working.

The following lists examples where circumstances are such that the risk assessment identifies that Lone Working should not be permitted:

- Entry into confined spaces where specific risk of danger has been identified.
- Electrical Live Working where the risks of electric shock cannot be controlled through suitable safe working procedures, taking into account duties under the Electricity at Work Regulations 1989.
- Use of ladders, which cannot be secured to prevent slipping.
- Work where safe access/egress or other site conditions require the intervention of a second person.
- Where effective communication cannot be achieved for the purpose of monitoring the well being of the employee.
- Where assessment has identified the task has a risk of injury through excessive physical effort or requires more than one person to operate essential controls for the safe operation of equipment.

Employees must be instructed to contact their Line Manager/Supervisor of any situation where lone working may increase the risk to health and safety.

TRAINING, COMPETENCY AND SUPERVISION

Lone workers must be suitably trained and qualified and have practical experience to carry out the task on their own and be fully aware of all Company safe working procedures.

Training is particularly important where there is no direct supervision to control, guide and help in certain situations.

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, it is *still the employer's duty to ensure that they remain healthy and safe at work. Supervision can help to ensure employees understand the risks associated with the work and the health and safety controls that are required.*

The extent of supervision where required, depends on the risks involved and the ability of the lone worker to identify hazardous situations, however all lone workers need to be sufficiently experienced and fully understand the risks and precautions involved in their work. *Supervisors can provide guidance (for example by phone) in situations where uncertainty exists and whenever site visits are made.*

New employees, undergoing training and carrying out a task which may present a high risk of injury or are dealing with new job situations must be accompanied until competent.

The level of supervision required is a line management decision, which should be based on the findings of the task risk assessment. The higher the risk, the greater the level of supervision required.

ON SITE LIAISON

Owners or persons in control of premises also have duties under health and safety legislation to provide a safe place of work and to inform visitors/contractors of any risks and appropriate control measures that should be taken on site.

Before work starts clients (controller of premises) should advise visitors/contractors of any special precautions or procedures required for work to be undertaken within their premises. This information should also include detail arrangements for emergencies.

SAFE WORKING PRACTICES

Recommendations of safety features in lifts/escalators should be provided to owners and those having effective control of premises, to reduce the risks to lone workers. Owners should be advised of their responsibilities as identified in BS 7255:2012 Code practice for Safe Working on Lifts and BS 7801:2011 Escalator and Moving Walks Code of practice for Safe Working on Escalators and Moving Walks. Owners of lifts and escalators should be positively encouraged to strive to provide the improvements included in the Codes of Practice - Clause 4 "Responsibility of Owners".

Suitable arrangements should be considered by the client such as voice communication devices fitted to the lift installation, to assist in monitoring the well being of lift company employee(s) and other visitors who may work on lifts.

MONITORING

Arrangements should be in place for monitoring the well being of lone workers to see that they remain safe.

Lone workers should keep their employer up to date regarding their work location and if applicable the time they are intending to arrive on site and estimate when the work should be complete.

The frequency and type of monitoring checks will be dependent on the foreseeable risks the

lone worker may be exposed to. Many companies will have their own methods for ensuring a suitable level of monitoring.

One method would be a log kept at the company branch/department to record all instances where lone workers have contacted the designated contact in accordance with the company procedure and kept for at least one calendar month.

Attention is drawn to new and changing technology now available which enables effective tracking of individuals and vehicles and facilities for raising alarm in an emergency situation.

ACTIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

Illness, accident and emergency situations may arise and lone workers must be capable of responding to them. It is important that employees who work alone report any medical condition that might affect their safety to their manager

Employees must make themselves familiar with site rules and emergency evacuation procedures and report any matter for concern immediately to their duty supervisor and site contact.

Employees must never put themselves or others affected by the employees actions at increased risk from working alone.

Site risk assessment should identify the foreseeable events e.g. accidents, fire, violence.

Lone workers should be instructed by those in controls of premises in the appropriate site emergency procedures, e.g. what to do in case of an accident, threatening situation etc. This will normally be covered during the site induction.

Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Occasionally risk assessment may indicate that lone workers need training in first aid.

FURTHER INFORMATION

HSE leaflet Working alone Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working, HSE Books INDG73 (rev3) 05/13 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg73.pdf>

HSE leaflet Violence at work, HSE Books INDG69 HSE Books 1996 <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf>

Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 L21

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l21.htm>

HSE leaflet Five Steps to Risk Assessment INDG163 (rev 2) HSE Books 2006

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

All the above are currently free to download

BS7255:2012

BS7801:2011