



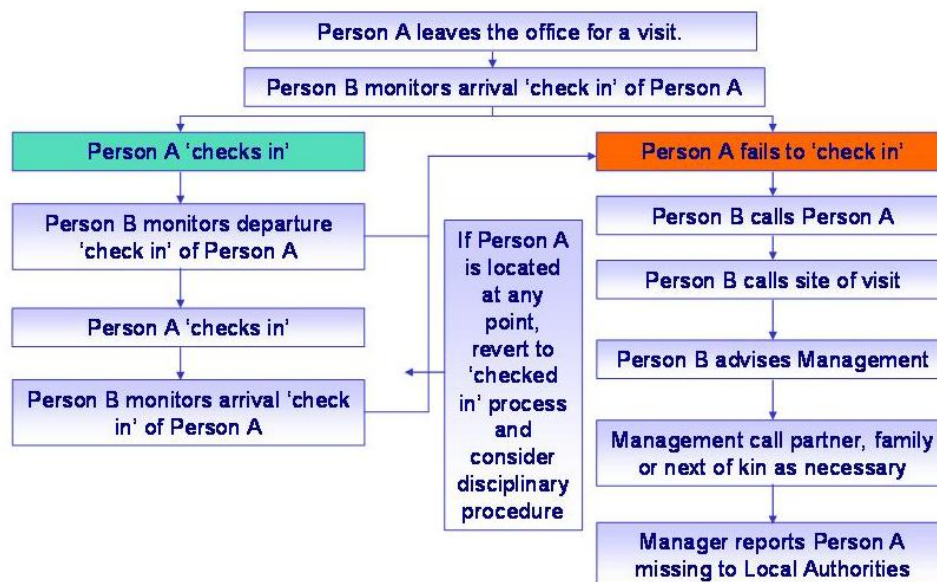
What is a Lone Worker?

The HSE (Health & Safety Executive) define lone workers as “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. Most employees will work on their own at some point – even if it is being the first or the last person in the office.

What Is A Lone Working System?

A lone working system is a method or technology based solution that encourages dynamic risk assessment but also provides a way of raising an alert and then tracing your staff when they are alone and/or off site to monitor their safety.

There are a variety of tracing systems available – some of them are very simple and low-tech (like a diary or whiteboard system) devised internally. A low-tech system might look something like this:



Others can utilise mobile phones, radios or dedicated lone worker devices to manage lone working staff. Before deciding to invest in a technology based lone worker system there are a number of things you should consider.

Do you need a lone worker system? The best way to establish whether your staff would benefit from a lone worker system is by carrying out a risk assessment. This should involve identifying all the hazards present in the workplace, and other, outside factors and the evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account any precautions already in place. For more guidance on conducting risk assessments, check out our resource 'Managing Personal Safety: A Guide' www.suzylamplugh.org/shop

It's worth remembering that there can be very specific risks that apply to lone workers but which may not exist with others. Are your lone workers at risk of verbal abuse from customers, clients or others? Do they drive on their own? Are they providing a service in the community?

Choosing a Lone Worker System

Is a lone worker system going to solve all your problems? Implementing a lone worker system will not on its own mitigate or remove risks. Most employers find that a lone worker system should form part of a total solution that also incorporates changes to procedures, dynamic risk assessment, a robust (and regularly reviewed) lone worker policy and personal safety training.

Which is the most appropriate system? Most people find it helpful to look at a number of systems. Costs can vary hugely and there are many different features available which may make a system more or less suitable to the needs of your company or organisation. Our website lists a number of the systems available, visit www.suzylamplugh.org/directory

Introducing the system in your workplace. The best way to introduce a new system into a workplace is to give employees – or a group of representatives from your employee community – a say in which system you choose. You could use a focus group approach to gain their opinions on the systems. You may find they spot things that you hadn't. Above all, employees need to know that you are introducing this new system to improve their safety and not in order to track their movements or check whether they are doing their job properly. Explain to staff why you are introducing the new system and why you think it is important. Personal safety awareness training may help employees to realise the benefits of the new system.

It is essential that employees understand how to use the system and remain familiarised with it; this can be achieved through training. It is also vital that the system is used consistently and that there are clear consequences for staff who fail to use it appropriately.

Choosing the best system for you. Ask for a demonstration of the system and see if it is available for you to trial/pilot. Find out if you can talk to people from a company or organisation which is already using the system. Be realistic about the risks to your staff and what will best address them.

Some useful questions to ask yourself before choosing a system:

- Do you want a system which is automated or a system which requires management from staff/managers?
- Do you want a system which operates on a mobile phone or involves a separate device?
- Do you want a guaranteed police response to an incident?
- Do you want the system to be able to record audio evidence for use in a possible prosecution?
- What kind of system fits best within the practices and culture of your organisation?
- When and where do your staff need to use the system? Do they work outside of office hours and/or in areas without phone signal?
- How much flexibility do you require in any system you introduce?
- Do you need the system to be able to address risks other than those to the personal safety of your staff (e.g. environmental threats)?
- What budget do you have available?
- Do I need the supplier of a technological solution to be able to provide me with reports on usage etc?

Some useful questions when assessing a system:

- How does the technology work?
- Is it GPS reliant or radio based?
- How does the system locate a staff member, do they need to have 'signal' like a mobile phone?
- Does the system require the staff member to raise the alarm if they are in trouble? If so how? Is it discreet/covert?
- Does the system require staff members to set their own 'log in' times? If so, will they remember to do this? Is it time consuming or difficult?
- Is there appropriate signal in the area that you will be using the system?
- If the system claims to be able to pinpoint someone, how accurately can it do this and are there any circumstances where it will not work?
- Will it work if the person is indoors, in a busy area (like a block of flats) or underground (i.e. in a car park)?
- What is the equipment like? Does it use a mobile phone? Does everyone in your organisation have a company mobile? If so, can the system utilise these or will you require new ones?
- Is the equipment heavy?
- Will the equipment itself pose a safety risk (for example, if it looks like or is a mobile phone, should staff be using it while they are out and about as this could make them vulnerable)?
- How does the equipment charge and how long does the charge last?
- What kind of protection does the system have against power interruptions?
- Will the company provide training for staff on how and why to use the system?
- Are the company providing the system and the staff and managers using it clear that you will be using it for personal safety reasons only (and not to track staff)?
- Is it possible to monitor use of the system? How will this be reported?
- How will an alert be responded to and how quickly?
- If the alert goes to another member of staff or a manager, what happens if they are unavailable? What is the back up?
- What will the staff member or manager receiving the alert need to do next? Contact Senior Management, Next of Kin? Do they have access to the information they need to follow the alert up?
- Does the company use a call centre to receive alerts?
- If so, are they available at all times, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year?
- Are the call centre staff properly trained on how to respond to an alert?

Involving the police and other emergency services. If an employee is in danger or has been attacked then the police need to be informed at once. The emergency services need as much information as possible to enable them to respond effectively. Your lone worker system may be able to use tracking technology to tell you the approximate location of your employee, but if you can also refer to an appointments diary and tell the police that they were visiting Mr Smith at Flat 168, Hampton Tower, London Estate then that gives them far more information than just the location of a block of flats. Lone worker systems are most valuable when they are used as part of a safety plan and backed up by resources like appointment diaries etc. Some lone worker systems which use technological devices will guarantee a police response to an incident.

A note on British Standards relating to lone worker systems. *BS8484* is the British Standard for the provision of lone worker device services, introduced in September 2009. The standard defines both lone worker devices and Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) compliance as well as covering aspects such as sound financial grounding, secure data protection, quality training and full audit capability from the supplier of a lone worker solution. *BS5979* is the British Standard specifically relating to the standard of ARCs.

In January 2010, ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers for England & Wales) published its updated policy document to Police forces that details when and how the Police will get involved in responding to a lone worker alarm. It calls for lone worker devices to be audited against *BS8484* and for the ARC to conform to Category II of *BS5979*. It is impossible to guarantee a Police response to a lone worker system which does not conform to both British standards. For further info on British Standards please visit www.bsigroup.com/

Evaluating the system. It is important that you evaluate the system you have chosen and make sure that all employees are happy and confident in using it. If any alerts have been issued, even if they were false alarms, check to see that the response was quick and appropriate. If there is a problem, providers can often adjust the system so that it better responds to the needs of specific organisations or companies. You will also need to consider what the consequences will be for any staff that do not use the system and be ready to enforce these consequences.

Once you have put together your tracing system, test its effectiveness by asking your staff to answer the *True or False* questions below - this will help you to highlight gaps in the system. If you can answer *True* to these statements, you're on the way to an effective system.

- My colleagues will know where to start looking should I not return to base on time.
- We have a system for me to raise the alarm discreetly/covertly in case of emergency while working alone.
- We have a clear procedure to follow in case someone does not return at the expected time.
- I am confident that an appropriate person will pick up the phone if I call in an emergency.
- If I decide to change my plans during the day someone would be aware of this.
- When I am lone working out of office hours, we have a system to monitor my safety.
- There is information available so that my manager could contact my partner, family or next of kin (to ensure my safety) should I fail to return from an appointment.
- My partner, family or next of kin would have contact details of a colleague should I fail to return from work, even if this should happen after office hours.
- If I do not follow my team's agreed tracing system, there will be consequences and I know what these are.