

"Self-insured Workers' Compensation Fund Members"

Lone Worker Safety

In almost all fields of work, employees may periodically or often find themselves working in situations where they are the only employee within the area. This could be anything from a single employee driving from one site to a specific job location hours away, to an employee staying later than anyone else and having to close up the building at the end of day. These lone workers typically do not recognize their increased risk when putting themselves in these situations where there may not be any safe contact who can help with emergencies, or prevent and deter unwanted hazards. Increased hazards for a lone worker can range from simply not having an additional person who can assist with team-lifting heavier loads to not having someone to respond to a medical emergency such as a heart attack. Specific hazards may be dependent on the location and environment, and may change with time of day or seasons. Specific hazards, for example, may be significantly warm climates where an employee is working outside and starts to exhibit signs of heat stroke, where others may not be present to recognize the early symptoms of this illness.



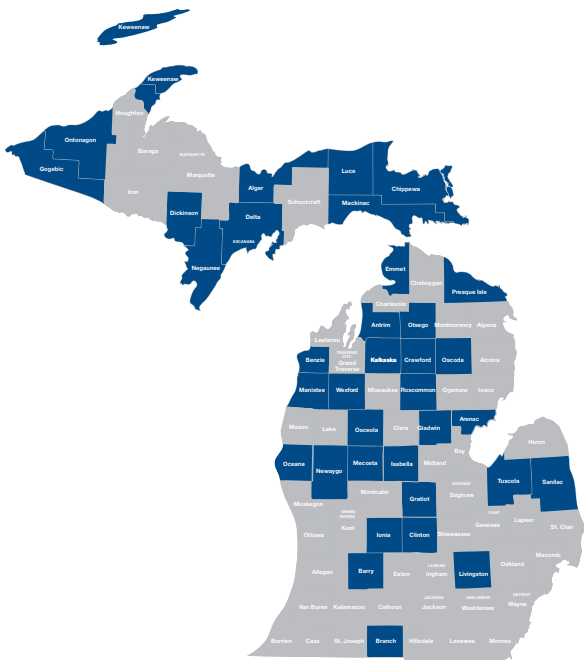
Lone Worker Safety cont.

Other specific hazards may be due to heightened crime rates in the area, and having an employee be considered an "easy target" to a would-be perpetrator or criminal.

Prevention of lone workers can be rather hard to achieve. Several jobs require some means of employees to be working by themselves either due to low demand or volume of the job, the inability to employ more workers for specific tasks, or any of dozens of other reasons. Referencing the hierarchy of safety controls, the most effective means of controlling hazards is to eliminate the hazard, substitute with something safer, engineering controls, administrative controls, and personal protective equipment (PPE), respectively. This means, the most effective ways to control this inherent hazard is to eliminate working alone, substitute lone workers, or put in engineering controls, which none of these are readily feasible in most instances. This leaves us with the remaining 2 controls.

Administrative controls are fairly straightforward. This could be as simple as radio, phone, or in-person check-ins on a predetermined time frame, such as 15 minute intervals during after-hours. Other means of these controls may be means of controlled areas, locked doors, not taking part in more hazardous activities during lone worker time, or simply having periodic training of dos and don'ts while working alone. Whenever any means of administrative controls, or really any kind of controls are used to address lone worker safety or any other hazard, procedures shall be developed and taught to all affected employees.

Training could consist of ensuring that you are always in contact with a colleague when traveling. To have employees know that they must be more alert and aware of their surroundings, and to have some pre-determined protocol of what to do when attempts to reach a lone worker go unanswered.



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Working Alone Safety

This brings us to our last control, personal protective equipment. PPE Controls may range from lone worker devices that allow remote monitoring of employees who may be exposed to dangers. Some of these devices have been around for several years, such as panic buttons under desks that can activate a call to the nearest dispatch to alert them of a security emergency. Newer devices are more designed around the ability to be mobile. While there are devices that are specific to the job, inexpensive but effective options may already be at your fingertips. A quick search on your phone's app store will result in dozens of apps that range from free, to a small monthly fee.

These apps allow someone to safely alert a designee of an emergency, make a call using limited button presses, allow for secure monitoring of workers exposed to environmental hazards, or to allow the user to hold down a button until safely in their locked vehicle during late shifts.

While there is little regulation out there to enforce these rules to protect employees, employers have the duty and shall always protect their workers from any recognized hazard. For more information on Lone Worker Safety.

As an employee working alone, it's important to request that your employer does the following:

Conduct a workplace hazard assessment of all potential risks you as a lone worker may face.

- Develop and implement workplace safety procedures tailored to the risks you face as a lone worker.
- Ensure all workers receive proper training, and determine a schedule for refresher training.
- Provide you and other employees who work alone with the appropriate protective clothing, protective barriers and escape routes.



How do you stay safe when working alone?

Tips to keeping safe at night for lone workers:

- Be aware of surroundings.
- Be confident and defuse the situation.
- Inform others of your whereabouts.
- Use a panic alarm or lone worker device.

What are the risks of working alone?

Hazards that lone workers may encounter include:

- Accidents or emergencies arising out of the work, including inadequate provision of first aid.
- Sudden illnesses.
- Inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities.
- Physical violence from members of the public and/or intruders.

What does OSHA say about working alone?

OSHA cites having a work alone policy as a general duty. OSHA does not have a specific requirement to develop and implement a work alone policy. But failure to have a policy could be considered a General Duty OSHA requirement and has been cited by OSHA in the past under the General Duty statute.

What is a lone worker policy?

A lone worker safety policy exists to tell employees how to remain safe while on the job, as well as how managers and team members should respond in case of an emergency. The policy needs to be in writing because health and safety training is not enough on its own.



7 Safety Rules to Avoid Workplace Injury

1. Keep work areas clean.

- Proper housekeeping alone can go a long way in preventing injuries. Injuries such as slips, trips, falls, lacerations, sprains, strains, etc. can be reduced by keeping work areas organized and clean.

2. Use the proper tool for the job.

- This is very important! If it doesn't cause an injury, using the wrong tool for the job can result in damage to the tool.

3. Always wear the proper PPE for the work task.

- Improper use of PPE or lack thereof, leads to many workplace injuries every year. PPE stands for Personal Protective Equipment and is the last line of defense when protecting employees from hazards at work. If you come into contact with a hazard when not wearing the correct PPE the injury will be more severe than if you were wearing it.

4. Never work on live equipment.

- Energy sources including electrical, mechanical, hydraulic, pneumatic, chemical, thermal, or other sources in machines and equipment can be hazardous to workers. During the servicing and maintenance of machines and equipment, the unexpected startup or release of stored energy can result in serious injury or death to workers.

5. Make sure chemicals are properly labeled and stored.

- OSHA issues many citations regarding the hazard communication every year. Keeping chemical storage records helps to prevent employees from inadvertently causing a chemical hazard by storing incompatible hazards together.

6. Communicate safety hazards to other personnel.

- Safety hazards are unsafe working conditions that can cause injury, illness, or death. These are categorized as biological, physical, ergonomic, chemical, or work organization hazards.

7. Stop work when needed to address hazards.

- Employees should always stop work to take the time to get hazards addressed and to make it safe to continue the task.