

HS26 Lone Working | Standard Operating Procedure

1. Background information

1.1. Introduction/Purpose

1.1.1. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is intended to assist managers and Heads of Department in assessing the risks associated with lone working. While there are no specific laws or regulations relating to lone working, SOAS has a duty of care to assess the associated risks involved, as dictated by the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. These regulations require identifying potential hazards and assessing the consequential risks, allowing the relevant measures to be put in place.

1.2. Scope

1.2.1. This procedure applies to anyone working, studying or taking part in any activity managed by SOAS, including staff, students, contractors and visitors. The procedure is intended to address the risks associated with lone working on SOAS premises.

1.3. Definitions

1.3.1. Lone Worker – Lone workers are those who work alone or in isolation, without close or direct supervision from colleagues. It also may occur where colleagues are working in the next room, or on other floors in the same building. Lone working may take place in permanent or other locations and can occur at any time, during normal working hours or out of hours.

1.3.2. The definition of lone worker includes but is not limited to:

- People in fixed establishments where only one person is present on the

premises, e.g., in small workshops, kiosks, shops and home workers;

- people who work separately from others, such as in factories, warehouses, research and training establishments, leisure centres or fairgrounds;
- people who work outside regular hours, such as cleaners, security, unique production, night shift workers, maintenance and repair staff;
- people who work away from their home base on construction sites, in plant installation, maintenance, cleaning work, electrical repairs, lift work, painting and decorating or vehicle recovery;
- agricultural and forestry workers; and
- service workers who collect rents, postal workers, home helpers, community nursing staff, pest control workers, drivers, engineers, estate agents, sales representatives and professionals visiting domestic and commercial premises.

1.3.3. Work – Paid employment (on a fixed or permanent contract), studying, carrying out research or volunteering.

1.3.4. Manager/Supervisor – A person with the duty to manage any aspect of the work activities in a department, where it is carried out by an employee or student, e.g., line manager, principal investigator, research group leader, etc.

1.3.5. Normal Working Hours – Normal working hours include times when first aiders and Fire Wardens are at optimum levels.

- This must take account of extended working hours such as nights, events, exhibitions and exam times, as well as normal SOAS closures, including Christmas, Easter and Bank Holidays.

1.3.6. Out of Hours – Times when first aiders and Fire Wardens are below optimum levels, such as evenings, early mornings, weekends and public holidays.

- Please note that out-of-hours work may not always constitute lone working.

1.4. Roles and Responsibilities

1.4.1. Heads of Department must ensure that there are arrangements in place to identify and control potential risks arising from lone working, including:

- A definition of normal working hours.
- A list of departmental activities which cannot be carried out whilst alone

(see Appendix B for guidance).

- Authorisation of routine specified lone working.
- Procedure for authorising non-routine lone working activities.

1.4.2. Managers/Supervisors must ensure that:

- Non-routine lone working is avoided where possible – see Appendix B for necessary controls to be put into place if such work is undertaken.
- Time spent working alone is planned.
- Risk assessments for the work state that additional controls are necessary if the work is carried out alone.
- Control measures identified are properly implemented.
- Risk assessments are regularly reviewed.

1.4.3. General health and safety responsibilities are undertaken as follows:

- The overall responsibility for health and safety within the university lies with the Director of Estates & Property Service - Andrew Goodman.
- The Director of Estates & Property Services is responsible for managing health and safety which includes staff members who work alone.
- The responsible person will ensure that suitable risk assessments are carried out before any lone working begins, and that adequate control measures are implemented to reduce and/or manage any risks associated with lone working.
- When carrying out the risk assessments, the responsible person will consider access and egress to the place of work, physical fitness that may be required, any medical conditions the employee may have, if there is a risk of violence or harm to the employee, whether the employee needs to use tools or machinery and so on.
- The responsible person will ensure that the employee is given all the necessary training so they can work safely in a variety of environments.
- The responsible person will ensure that all training records are maintained.
- The responsible person will ensure that employees' personal data, including information about their health, collected during lone working risk assessments will be handled in accordance with the university's data protection policy.
- Those permitted to work unsupervised will be decided by the responsible person.

1.4.4. The person responsible for the lone working risk assessment will:

- Consider the extended risks of lone working to expectant mothers and younger employees;
- involve the employee in the assessment process and the development of safe working methods;
- inform the employee of the risk assessment's findings;
- maintain a file of all lone working risk assessments; and
- ensure that the employees' personal data, including information about their health, collected during lone working risk assessments will be handled in accordance with the university's data protection policy.

1.4.5. Employee Duties: The employee.....will ensure that any part of their home designated as a work area is maintained to a professional standard. This includes the following actions:

- Working with the university's Health & Safety management, the employee shall ensure that any hazards inherent with their work activities are properly managed and that protocols on SOAS' premises are implemented.
- If any part of the work area becomes unsuitable due to the work process changing, damage or breakdown of equipment or because of the employee's physical needs etc., the employee must inform their line manager as soon as they are able.
- The employee will inform their line manager of any incidents or safety concerns.
- Where PPE is needed following a Risk Assessment, the employee is required to use it.

2. Main Content

2.1. Assessing the Risk

2.1.1. The main risks associated with lone working are:

- Being unable to summon help in the event of an injury, ill health, or an emergency.
- An inability to safely carry out a task alone.

- 2.1.2. A Risk Assessment should indicate any significant risk and detail how the risks can be adequately controlled for lone working to continue. Risk Assessments often identify the correct level of supervision or backup required.
- 2.1.3. Some risk assessments, such as those for working in confined spaces, state that communication and rescue arrangements need to be in place where at least one other person is present.
- 2.1.4. Control measures may include training, instruction, communications, supervision or personal protective equipment.
- 2.1.5. If a Risk Assessment indicates that it is unsafe to work alone, arrangements should be in place for providing help or backup. However, in some cases, it may be decided that carrying out a particular task independently represents too much of a risk and will not be allowed.
- 2.1.6. If a member of staff is working at another employer's workplace, the occupier should inform SOAS of the lone working risks and control measures needed.

2.2. Exceptions

- 2.2.1. Line Managers must consider the following when deciding if lone working is to be permitted:
- Are any individuals especially at risk when working alone?
 - Is the person medically fit to work alone? Managers who are concerned about an individual's fitness for lone working should refer them to Occupational Health after consultation with their HR partner.
 - The experience of the individual wishing to work alone.
 - Individuals with impaired vision, hearing or mobility.
 - Whether all emergency procedures have been explained and understood with regard to individuals who speak English as a second language.

2.3. Work Patterns

- 2.3.1. The following patterns need to be considered:
- Some work may begin during normal working hours and continue out of hours.
 - Continuous experiments.
 - Flexible work pattern or working from home (please refer to the Flexible

Working Arrangements and the Policy and Procedure document.).

- If a lone worker is working at another employer's workplace.

2.4. Location or Work Area

2.4.1. The work may be carried out in a location managed by SOAS, another employer or an external location. The work may involve multiple locations:

- An office or workshop.
- Storeroom, plant room, cold room or server room.
- Home of the research subject or a vehicle.

2.4.2. Guidance for work being carried out overseas can be found in the Overseas Travel Policy.

- If the task is to be carried out by someone working alone, the risk assessment must consider the hazards of being alone in addition to the hazards involved with the work itself (see Appendix B for further guidance).

2.5. Managing the Risks

2.5.1. Managers must ensure that:

- The lone worker understands the risks and precautions involved in their work and can carry out their working duties without direct supervision.
- The lone worker has all information needed to deal with potential emergencies (see Appendix A for guidance).
- The lone worker can safely enter and exit their workplace.

2.5.2. Managers should consider one or more of the following controls, depending on the level of risk determined:

- A start and finish time has been agreed upon for out-of-hours lone working.
- The lone worker informs their supervisor when work starts or finishes.
- Periodic checks by the supervisor (or a designated person) are carried out at agreed intervals. Checks can be made in person, by telephone or by two-way radio.
- The lone worker regularly checks in with the supervisor or designated person.
- Ensuring that the chosen means of communication works in the chosen area, for example, access to adequate mobile phone reception.

- A procedure is in place to prevent and deal with the failure to contact lone workers at the agreed intervals.
- They consider if the lone worker is at risk of violence.
- They consider if the female members of staff are at risk.
- They involve others when considering both the potential risks and measures to control them.
- They consider if it is necessary to contact the respective staff member upon completion of work or at the end of their working day.
- They consider if lone working can be avoided.

2.6. Persons at Risk

2.6.1. At SOAS, there are several jobs that may require lone work, where the risks of such are also present. As a result, the following groups should be considered:

- Academic staff.
- Students.
- Maintenance staff.
- Professional services staff.
- Cleaning staff.
- Catering staff.
- Office staff.

2.7. Reviewing the Risk Assessment

2.7.1. Managers must review the risk assessment regularly, at intervals determined by the risk assessment, such as:

- If an incident or accident occurs.
- If something changes, such as people, equipment or location.
- If it is still necessary for the work to be carried out alone.

2.8. Training

2.8.1. Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision, so it is important to consider:

- If lone workers are sufficiently experienced and fully understand the risks and the consequent precautions required.

- If limits have been set regarding what is and is not appropriate whilst working alone.
- If the lone worker can deal with unusual or unfamiliar circumstances beyond their training and can recognise when to seek advice.

2.9. Emergency Procedures

2.9.1. No employee will be permitted to work alone without their immediate line manager, acting as their safety buddy, being aware of their location and approximate finish time.

2.9.2. The employee will be required to contact their safety buddy at pre-agreed intervals.

2.9.3. Should any employee fail to make contact as agreed, the safety buddy will attempt to reach the employee by telephone.

2.9.4. Should this be unsuccessful, the safety buddy will contact the names on the Client Safety lists or the emergency services.

2.10. Reviewing the Standard Operating Procedure

2.10.1. This SOP will be reviewed annually or when there is a change in circumstances, in work practices or the introduction of new legislation.

3. Appendices

Appendix A: Lone Worker Emergency Procedures

Arrangements for normal working hours may be different or need to be supplemented when working out of hours.

	Normal working hours	Additional procedures for out of hours work
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<p>How to contact security</p>	<p>Provide the lone worker with the internal emergency number. (555, 0207 637 2388)</p> <p>If work is off site, contact 999.</p> <p>In some situations, contacting security may not be possible, and a lone worker alarm may be appropriate. *</p> <p>If a panic button is installed, staff must understand when to use it and what to expect as a response.</p>	<p>Ensure that the passenger lift alarms/ telephones are responded to out of hours.</p> <p>Access to the building is controlled (swipe card).</p> <p>Ensure personal security and transport arrangements are in place when leaving the workplace late at night.</p>
<p>How to raise the alarm on discovering a fire</p>	<p>As displayed on fire action notices.</p>	
<p>Evacuation procedures</p>	<p>As displayed on fire action notices.</p>	<p>Ensure normal evacuation routes are available out of hours (please note that building maintenance may be taking place on some occasions).</p> <p>A logbook for out-of-hours lone working can be found in reception and should be signed when entering and leaving. This allows security and fire brigade personnel to account for all building occupants.</p>
		<p>This will only be effective if lone workers enter and leave via the main reception (including cyclists) and occupants who entered the building prior to the commencement of the out-of-hours period sign the logbook.</p>
<p>Accidents / incidents</p>	<p>Ensure the lone worker understands how to report accidents and incidents, regardless of whether they result in injury.</p>	<p>This can be done the next day if it is not practical out of hours.</p>
<p>First aid arrangements</p>	<p>Ensure the lone worker knows how to contact the nearest first aider.</p>	<p>When working out of normal office hours and no first aiders are available, ring for security on 555.</p>

Appendix B: Example Risk Assessment

Please note – this is an example, managers and department heads should assess each case individually.

HAZARD	RISK LEVEL	EXAMPLE OF POSSIBLE CONTROLS
Slips and trips	Low	Ensure, during departmental self-inspections, that any hazards, such as torn carpets or trailing cables receive prompt remedial attention. Lone working outside of normal hours is not permitted if mobility is temporarily impaired (e.g., leg injury).
Fire or another emergency	Medium	Ensure that appropriate fire safety training has been given and that staff are familiar with emergency procedures for their working area.
Accidents/ first aid	Medium	Ensure that lone workers are aware of their nearest first aider and their extension number. If they are unavailable, security should be contacted on 555.
Electrical accident	Low	Ensure that PAT tested items (kettles, desk lamps, etc.) are clearly labelled and all electrical cables are regularly inspected for damage. Lone workers are advised not to interfere with plugs/ cables when they are connected to the power supply.
Work with any potentially hazardous items of equipment or materials	Medium	Ensure that any work involving such items or materials is done during normal building occupancy. Also, ensure familiarity with the safety data sheets and COSHH assessments.
Manual handling of loads	Medium	Advise not to lift or move any load which is likely to increase the risk of injury. Reschedule work to a time when assistance is available. Alternatively, use lifting/ moving aids where this can safely facilitate single-person operation.
Intruder in building	Low	Ensure that staff know how to contact security promptly should there be suspicion that an intruder is present in the building. Advise staff not to confront the intruder and to lock the doors and await the arrival of security.
Safe routes home after work	Medium	Ensure that a plan is in place for getting to the staff member's transport home after leaving the workplace, considering potential safety issues, such as poorly lit routes, etc.
Personal medical conditions	Will depend on condition	Ensure that any medical conditions which might be relevant are fully discussed and, if necessary, Occupational Health/ a GP. Lone working is not to be permitted if a condition is considered to further increase risk.

Young persons (under 18)	High	Lone working not permitted for those under 18.
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Matrix used to determine risk level

3 x 3 Risk Matrix

L I K E L I H O O D	Likely	Medium Risk	High Risk	Extreme Risk
	Unlikely	Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
	Highly Unlikely	Insignificant Risk	Low Risk	Medium Risk
		Slightly Harmful	Harmful	Extremely Harmful
	CONSEQUENCES			

Document History

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