



# The Ultimate Guide to Lone Working Safety

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# Introduction

The safety of your lone workers is the responsibility of every employer. If you are in charge of any lone workers across your business, it's likely you're already well aware of your responsibility to ensure your lone workers are protected and that health and safety regulations are being met.

However, you might not have full clarity on everything that involves lone working, from developing the right steps that ensure HSE compliance to tools that can help you ensure the safety of your lone workers. There are also many aspects of health and safety law that you may not be aware of.

To fully understand lone working, we've put together this complete guide to help demystify everything about lone worker protection. In this guide, we cover in a detailed way the following topics:



Lone working: the basics



Assessments



Hazards affecting lone workers



Policies



Employer Responsibilities For Health and Safety



Solutions



Regulations & Laws

This ultimate guide will also provide references to tools and templates to help you implement what we explain in it.





# Lone Worker Definition

What is a lone worker? The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) defines lone workers as “those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision”. It’s estimated that 8 million people across the UK can be defined as a lone worker, which is about 1 in every 4 people of the 31.2 million UK working population.

Common examples of lone workers are:



Construction workers



Farmers and agricultural workers

- ✓ Salespeople who visit homes and businesses
- ✓ Real estate agents
- ✓ Electricians
- ✓ Security professionals
- ✓ Nannies
- ✓ Factory workers
- ✓ Cleaners
- ✓ Plumbers
- ✓ Delivery drivers
- ✓ Carers

The term 'lone worker' does not mean they're not part of a team, nor does it mean they are necessarily working in isolation without the presence of any person.

Rather, lone workers are anyone whose job scope includes duties that will have them working without a co-worker or team member present, whether they are in a private, enclosed, or public workplace.

Lone workers can also be working in teams within the same vicinity or building, but they are located far enough away from their teammates and/or manager that they are out of sight and out of hearing range, whether that's at a fixed location, on the road, or somewhere else.

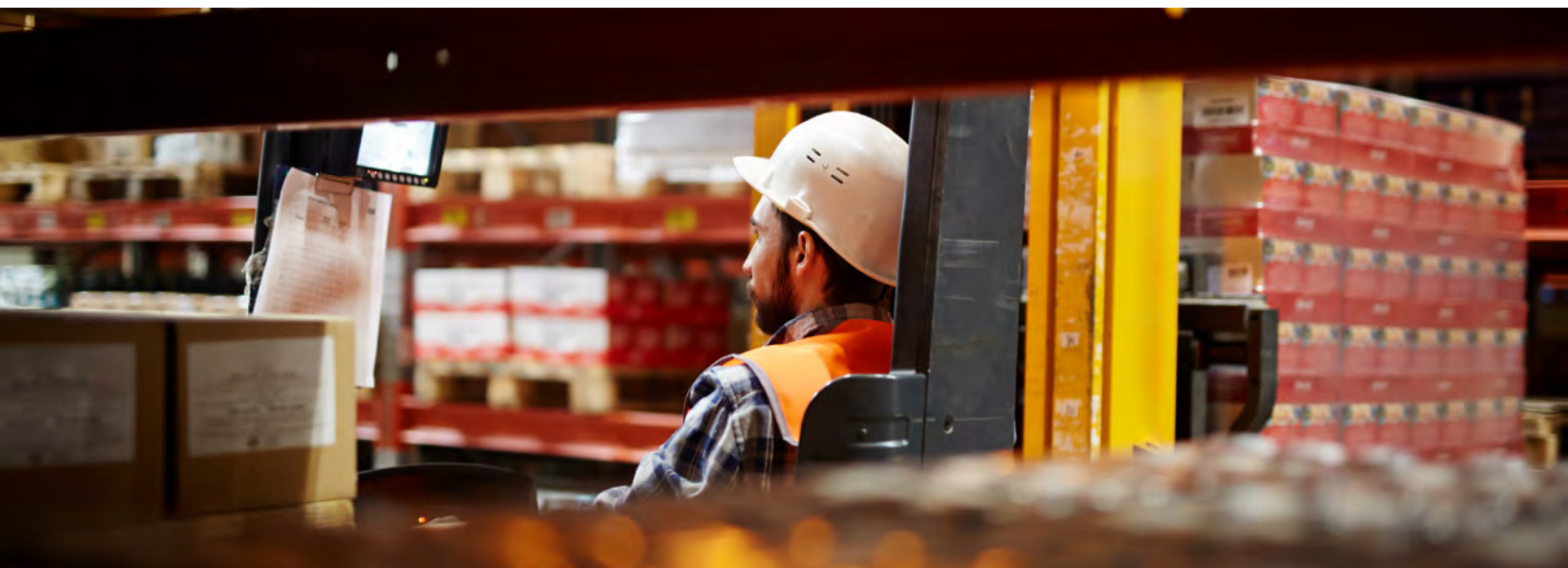
Recent years and months have also seen a steady rise in the number of people previously based in office environments working from home instead. Remote working is also legally recognised as a form of lone working.

It is an employer's responsibility to manage the safety risks of anyone that is legally defined as a lone worker, whether they're working from home, a volunteer, or any other form of lone working. Measures such as keeping in touch with staff, monitoring stress levels, and ensuring that everyone has the correct equipment should be observed across the board.

## Lone working throughout history

Lone working has been a part of civilisation since the beginning of time, with jobs like hunting, shepherding and exploring all requiring workers to operate on their own or in high-risk positions away from their central 'teams'. That's tens of thousands of years of lone working, but we can safely assume that the cavemen of yesteryear weren't taking the proper precautions against accidents or injury.

These roles in society most likely helped set in motion the concept of community as we experience it today, with innovation in industries such as agriculture relying heavily on one person doing the work of many. Hunter-gatherer families wouldn't only take care of the needs of their own partners and children (and parents and extended families and so on) but would likely appoint the person best equipped for the job to collect food and other supplies for the whole group.



This meant that others could concentrate on their own equally challenging tasks, like forming armies, nurturing families or pushing forward the intellectual development of the human race. No biggie.



Lone working has obviously come a long way since those heady times, with the descriptor now applying to people across a vast range of industries ranging from repair technicians commuting to job sites to developers working from their desk at home. Then there's real estate agents and fishermen, journalists and cross-country lorry drivers - the list includes hundreds of thousands of unique roles performed by lone workers.

## Working alone today and beyond

In modern society, more and more people are working alone, whether they're required to by the specifics of their roles, or have chosen to work remotely to avoid the lengthy commute into an office every day. The rise of modern technology has empowered both employers and employees to create a more versatile job market and also to make remote or lone working much safer to perform.

Over the last few decades, governments have created strict laws around employee safety that must be followed to avoid the harsh penalties given out to employers who breach them. The lasting positive impact of this has been tremendous, with many of the most life-threatening dangers that used to be inherent to working alone now far less common.

Of course, lone worker solutions aren't just vital to keeping those working alone safe from abuse or harm, but can also be crucial to ensuring that at-risk workers in environments such as factories, warehouses and more are also protected. So while many of the laws passed between the 1970s-1990s don't mention lone workers specifically, they are written in a way that offers an umbrella of protection for a vast array of different workers in a variety of conditions.

It can be shocking to read some of these laws today, as it's hard to imagine a reality in which things such as giving employees access to a bathroom or water wasn't seen as essential. To a modern reader, businesses that fail to provide the necessary resources for their workers would likely be viewed as entirely irresponsible and neglectful.

That's why those responsible for lone workers - whether that's HR, the boss of a small company or a dedicated health and safety department - need to consider how they adapt to this new landscape carefully.





# The risks lone workers face

Employers have a preliminary obligation and legal duty to provide a safe work environment for everyone. This includes safety measures to protect lone workers from hazards in the workplace.

The first step in protecting lone workers is by understanding the types of hazards that can come from both inside and outside of the workplace. Knowing what those hazards are will help you determine how best to protect them.

The risks that lone workers face when they're isolated and/or working alone in the field are diverse. Here, we will list some of the most common hazards.

## Dangers from the Environment

There are many types of hazards that affect lone workers. Here is a quick checklist to help you identify the environmental hazards lone workers can face.



**Safety hazards:** These risks will be specific to the task at hand. Consider all elements of the job that could lead to an accident. This can include factors such as working at height and heavy machinery.



**Biological and chemical hazards:** Lone workers can be exposed to biological and chemical hazards specific to the job, capable of causing injury or illness to the lone worker, such as when working in a laboratory or with waste materials. Exposure can also occur in the public space, such as during times of a pandemic.



**Physical hazards:** Lone workers who work outside of a traditional office environment will have a higher chance of being exposed to physical hazards such as harsh weather, icy roads, low visibility, and so on.



**Natural hazards:** Natural hazards such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and avalanches can injure or trap lone workers in confined spaces.



**Social hazards:** Lone workers face high-risk exposure to social hazards involving violence such as assault or robbery. This risk is higher in night-shift jobs or jobs in remote locations.



**Personal health hazards:** Shift work that can cause sleep deprivation is one potential example of a personal health hazard that can risk the wellbeing of your employees.

## Dangers from Lack of Training

Other than environmental hazards, workers can become a risk to themselves if they lack the adequate training to prevent accidents. Training includes both the training that makes them skilled at their job to avoid potentially harmful mistakes, as well as health and safety training specific to their job.

## Dangers from Loss or Lack of Communication

Loss of communication, or lack of communication, for lone workers is a growing problem. Although we have smartphones and high-speed internet, factors such as remote locations, natural disasters, and accidents can cut off communication vital to assess the current safety of lone workers.

## Dangers from Sudden Illness

Sudden illness such as heart attacks or strokes can affect lone workers, and if they are alone without the presence of others such as customers, this could mean a delay in receiving the life-saving emergency medical care they need.



## Take the Proactive Step to Protect Lone Workers

At the end of the day, your employees are your greatest assets and their safety is your responsibility. By identifying the hazards that your company's lone workers are exposed to, assessing its risks, and then taking proactive measures to minimise these risks and protect your lone workers, you can save yourself—and your firm—a lot of unnecessary stress.

Implementing the right protocols and safety measures to avoid preventable accidents for lone workers can save your firm from unnecessary medical claims and even from negative PR. In cases where you face an occasional crisis that could not be avoided, simply being prepared and knowing what procedures to follow can help you, your team, and your lone workers better navigate through the emergency with positive outcomes.

Furthermore, taking the measures to protect your lone workers can also help you avoid any penalties following a Health & Safety Executive (HSE) inspection. In the event of unfortunate fatalities in the workplace, these measures can even serve to protect you and your company from personal liability such as the corporate manslaughter act.



# Employer Responsibilities For Health and Safety

The law states that employers are responsible for the welfare of their employees and anyone else who could be impacted by their business. In cases where 100% safety cannot be achieved, then they should do everything 'reasonably practicable'.

There are many parts to achieving this, from assigning certain duties to the most 'competent' person in the organisation, to simply speaking with workers about what risks they may face on a daily basis. It's also important for any new or updated health and safety policies and regulations to be communicated clearly to everyone across the business - even those not based in central headquarters.

The main health and safety responsibilities of employers are:

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
|  <p>1</p>  | Educate yourself on the law.          |  <p>4</p>  | Create a health and safety policy                |
|  <p>2</p>  | Conduct a risk assessment             |  <p>5</p>  | Speak with employees and make training available |
|  <p>3</p> | Choose your health and safety leaders |  <p>6</p> | Provide reliable incident reporting solutions    |

Even with the best health and safety policy in the world, accidents will still likely happen from time to time. But there are ways to significantly mitigate the severity of these incidents and give workers the power to raise the alarm should something happen while they're at work.

One of the best solutions are [lone worker alarms](#), which can be used by anyone who may need to call for help during their shift. The idea behind these wearable devices is that users can press a dedicated SOS button if they are in trouble or have suddenly fallen ill, and many also include a Man Down alarm sensor that alerts a chosen contact if a worker has fallen.

## British Legislation

Under British law, few pieces of legislation specifically address the needs of lone workers and employers' responsibilities towards them.

However, all employers have a duty of care to assure the safety and wellbeing of their workforce and ensure that lone workers are provided with the same standards of safety as their office-based colleagues.

Legislation that must be complied with includes:



The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.



The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007.



The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.



The Health & Safety Offences Act 2008.





# Achieving Health and Safety Compliance for Your Business

While a lot of the responsibility for workplace health and safety does fall on the shoulders of the employer, employees also have a role to play.

Workers have a duty of care towards their own health and safety and that of others who could be impacted by their actions, and it is also a responsibility of the employee that they cooperate with the rules and policies outlined by their employer.

But overall it falls to the employer to properly devise, outline and communicate health and safety plans that are designed to protect everyone's welfare. While this can certainly be a challenge, it ultimately leads to a happier, more productive workforce.



# Lone Worker Risk Assessment

Preparation is key in all areas of life. In business, proper preparation can be the difference between success and failure. While many business leaders focus on market assessment to prepare business strategies, one often overlooked aspect of preparation in business is a lone working risk assessment.

Assessing the risks for lone workers can be more complex than a risk assessment of the general working environment. The complexities are due to the unique hazards and greater risks faced by a lone worker who works by themselves without close or direct supervision.

## What is a lone working risk assessment?

You know that you need to perform a risk assessment for your lone workers, but how do you go about starting? Well, the first thing you need to know is what a lone worker risk assessment is and what it aims to achieve in the long-run.

Let's begin by understanding what a general health and safety risk assessment is. Put simply, a risk assessment is a review of workplace conditions and the dangers that could be present. These dangers could be posing a risk to your workers, managers, customers, or a combination of these factors.



The main objective of a general risk assessment is to determine how to decrease occupational injuries and ill health for your company. The solutions involved after a risk assessment can range from health and safety training to PPE, a regular schedule of equipment maintenance, and so on.



When focusing on lone workers, the objective also includes taking measures to mitigate the increased risks lone workers face, particularly when others are not around to communicate with or assist in the face of danger.

## The 5 steps of lone working risk assessment

You know that you need to perform a risk assessment for your lone workers, but how do you go about starting? Well, the first thing you need to know is what a lone worker risk assessment is and what it aims to achieve in the long-run.



Not all hazards may apply to your lone workers. If they work in an office environment, for example, you probably don't need to worry about looking at the risks of working at height. However, if you regularly have people working alone in a warehouse environment, then you'll need to make sure there is no danger of trips, slips and falls and possibly even conduct a separate fire risk assessment.

While you're at the stage of identifying the hazards, it will be useful to observe and speak with people from every level of your organisation to help you determine where hazards might lie, especially in areas where they may ordinarily be missed.

Once you have identified the hazards, the next step is to assess the risks. Think about what type of injury or illness could occur as a consequence of these hazards and then list the controls that can mitigate these risks.

Then, it is important to record the hazards and risks you've identified and assessed. Keeping records of your risk assessments is a legal requirement if you employ five or more people.

Finally, the last step of the process is to review the controls you have in place, as well as the controls you will need to include, to mitigate the risks. These controls are not just limited to the prevention of accidents, but also includes the training, systems, and processes for the team to adhere to in the case of a lone worker being involved in an accident or dangerous situation.

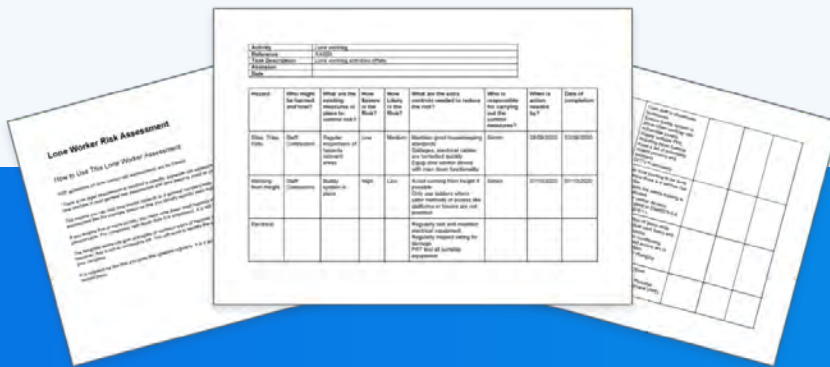


# How to do a lone working risk assessment the right way

You know that you need to perform a risk assessment for your lone workers, but how do you go about starting? Well, the first thing you need to know is what a lone worker risk assessment is and what it aims to achieve in the long-run.

- 1 It ensures you do not miss out on any critical steps for each hazard identified.
- 2 It makes it easier to spot weak areas that need extra solutions.

- 3 It gives your team members quick visibility on what they are responsible for to ensure the safety of lone workers in the organisation.



To help you get started, we have a free lone worker risk assessment template that you can download.

**DOWNLOAD**

This template is pre-filled with examples of common types of hazards lone workers typically face and popular mitigation methods for them. However, this is not an exhaustive list. You will need to identify and add the specific hazards your lone workers face and mitigation methods specific to your company.

Here are a few important tips to help you fill out the lone worker risk assessment template with due diligence.

1

Speak to your workers to review the existing measures in place to control the risk of each hazard.

- a Do they feel the current measures are adequate?
- b Do they have any suggestions to improve the controls? These suggestions can range from upgrading PPE to updating procedures.



This review can be done individually, in a group, or as an anonymous survey.

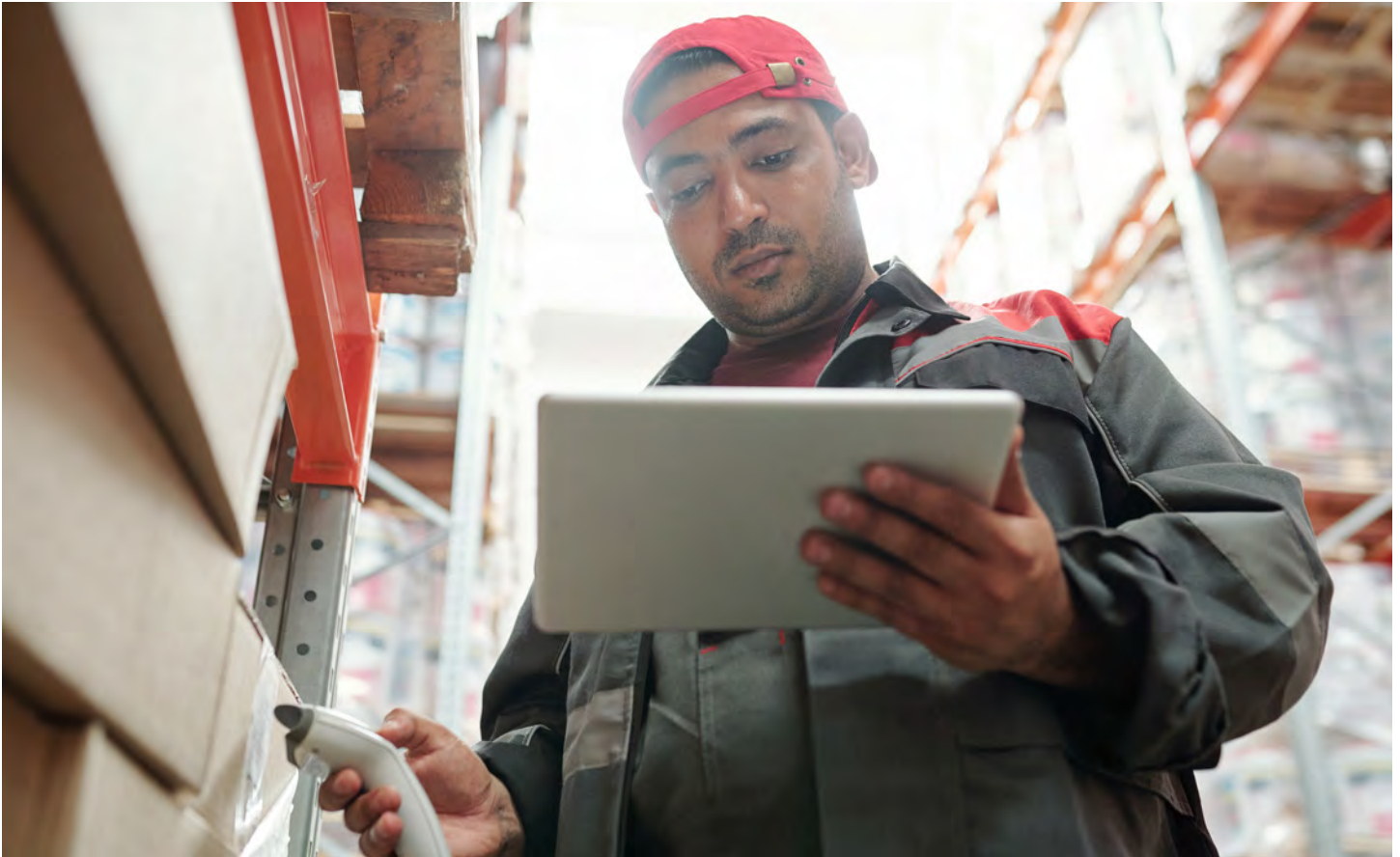
2

Research what other companies within your industry do to mitigate the risks for their lone workers. If possible, connect with others within your industry to determine the best practices for your industry.

3

Stay updated with the latest technologies for lone workers. Evaluate which of these technologies can be beneficial as a control measure for the hazards you identify.





# Lone Worker Policy

Health and safety is one of the biggest concerns for businesses, so how do you ensure your lone worker policy covers employees who regularly work on their own?

Many UK businesses draft a clear, comprehensive lone worker policy to enforce certain safety measures for lone workers and their managers. The lone worker policy is a written document that tells your entire team the precautions, safety gear, and procedures to take while working alone.

## What is a lone worker policy?

A lone worker policy is the standard written document a company and its lone workers will follow daily to adhere to certain safety precautions. Since lone workers spend time away from other team members, it is vital to create systems for protecting solo workers while they're on the job.



Common lone worker policies detail how an isolated worker should report an emergency, the safety precautions they must take while performing a task, any special gear they should wear while on the job, and how often they must report progress from the job site, among other details.



Multiple factors should be considered when thinking about your lone worker policy. The obvious factors have to do with the job itself: Are there common risks like falling, electrocution, getting stuck, or lost that are inherent to the employee's role? If so, there should be guidelines within your lone worker policy to help employees stay safe.

Other factors are more general. What if a lone worker gets sick, robbed, or attacked? Your lone worker policy should have clear, situation-specific procedures and rules to make sure they always have proper protection. At the end of the day, each lone worker policy is unique to the company and role.



## Do I need a lone worker policy?

Employers are responsible for the health and safety of their workforce and contractors.

Fortunately, a good lone worker policy is presented as a joint effort between employee and employer to create a safe working environment. A lone worker safety policy exists to tell employees how to remain safe while on the job, as well as how managers should respond in case of an emergency.

## How to draft a lone worker policy

To begin, consider the health and safety risks inherent to the job as well as common challenges and risks of working or commuting alone.



# How to gather the right information

There are three primary ways to gather the information you need to draft a comprehensive lone worker policy: listen to your employees, observe them on the job, and consider previous challenges or problems.



## Listen to employees:

- Conduct a survey to understand the biggest fears or dangers your employees face working by themselves.
- Take written inventory of all machinery, chemicals, or other hazardous tools a lone worker may come into contact with during their shift.
- Create focus groups to discuss what policies or procedures would make your employees feel safer on the job.



## Observe employees on the job:

- Pay attention to risks that your employee may not think of. These can include driving or walking through high-crime areas, losing phone signal while working remotely, or having a vehicle run out of gas or break down on their way to a job site.



- Consider the safety equipment used on the job. Will it properly protect your employees in case of incidents?
- In the worst-case scenario, what devices or procedures are in place (or lacking) to make sure emergency support can find and aid stranded or injured workers?



## Consider previous challenges:

- When an incident occurs on the job, ask the employee what went wrong and how your company could potentially prevent a similar occurrence in the future.
- Refer to past incidents by speaking to the employees involved and returning to any records from that day.
- Consult with companies in similar fields to consider additional incidents that haven't happened within your company but may otherwise be common to your field.



## What to include in a lone worker safety policy

Once you've gathered sufficient information about the safety needs of your lone workers, it's time to begin forming your actual policy. One of the simplest methods is to turn your policy into a checklist.

Before pilots take off, they follow a strict checklist to make sure the plane is safe and ready for flight. To be clear: This isn't a list of recommendations. Pilot checklists include specific, strict guidelines that must be checked off every time.

Your safety policy should be similar. Use instructive language. Instead of saying, "Consider wearing a lone worker device," say, "All lone workers must wear their lone safety device while working remotely." The declarative nature of your checklist will ensure greater safety by eliminating choice. These are demands, not considerations.



Use the information you gathered through surveys, questionnaires, and following your employees on the job to create clear rules.

If the nature of your lone workers' role changes from day to day, then include if-then style rules. For example, "If you enter a construction site, then you must wear a hardhat the entire time you're on the premises."

A lone worker policy should be readily available to all your lone workers and their managers. Lone workers need to know how to perform their job at maximum safety. Managers of lone workers need to know what to do in case of an injury or other emergency. Having an up-to-date, written policy is the best way to make sure everyone can access the information they need.



# How to enforce a lone worker policy

Enforcing a new policy is easiest when everyone understands why the policy exists. Make it clear to employees that following the rules in your lone worker policy is mandatory for their job. Explain that your highest priority is employee safety, which means strict adherence to health and safety rules.

If you design your lone worker policy in the form of a checklist, you can require lone workers to turn in the filled-out checklist each day before going to the job. This ensures they bring along any safety gear, lone worker safety device, or proper tools for safely accomplishing their job.



# How often should you update your policy?

There is no strict frequency here. As your employees go to the worksite every day, you and your employees will inevitably find new rules to add to the lone worker policy. It's wise to perform regular surveys and focus groups with your team to ensure your policy is up to date and considers any new threats, tools, or challenges.

Expect to take a hard look at your lone worker safety policy at least once per year to determine which elements need to be updated or added.



# Implementing Comprehensive Lone Worker Solutions

In summary, lone workers require more specific attention than general workers when it comes to health and safety procedures.

Despite the need for specific lone worker health and safety solutions, there is a tendency for lone worker protection to be seen as either an afterthought or an unnecessary expense in the health and safety world. The reason this happens is likely due to how the intricacies and additional steps of focusing on lone working safety can feel like a difficult burden upon managers and employers.

However, as you can now see, conducting a lone worker risk assessment and writing a lone worker policy doesn't need to be complicated when you have a headstart with the right [templates](#) and [guidelines](#).

Monitoring and creating top-notch working procedures don't need to be complicated either, thanks to the [lone worker safety devices](#) and [mobile apps](#) now available for lone working.

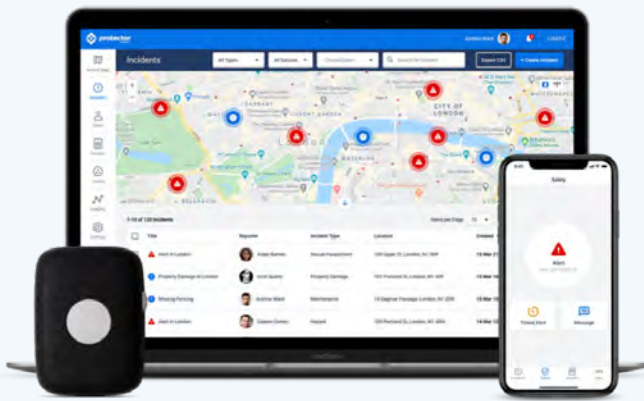
Lone worker alarms, for example, allow users to access help and assistance whenever they need it, with features such as an SOS button and Man Down sensor that detects when they have taken a fall.



These personal safety devices can often just be clipped on a belt or worn on a lanyard and will connect the wearer with contacts from their own company or, alternatively, highly-trained operators who can alert emergency responders if necessary.

Lone worker alarms are only as effective as the workforce management software or alarm monitoring procedures behind it. Our own Protector™ software keeps track of workers via real-time GPS data and stores details of all activation alerts for access later.





This can be invaluable when it comes time to update your policy, as you'll be working from real information rather than hypotheticals. To experience first-hand how this can impact your organisation, you can [request a free trial of Protector™ via our contact form here.](#)

Lone worker protection can be viewed with apprehension by many businesses, but it doesn't have to feel like a burden. With the right tools and procedures in place, health & safety professionals can respectively meet the safety and compliance needs of their workers and organisation without feeling overwhelmed by the specific intricacies of lone worker protection.





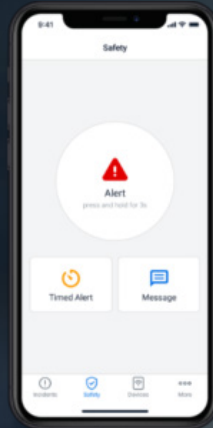
# Get a Free Trial

Enjoy peace of mind with GPS-enabled safety devices, apps, and alarm monitoring for your workers at risk that are visually intuitive and easy to use.

Our end-to-end lone worker safety devices and apps connect to our 24/7 monitoring centre or designated members of your team, giving your team peace of mind that emergency help is on-hand in a matter of seconds.



**Safe Pro Device**



**Lone Worker App**

Looking to see how our solution can help you protect your lone worker workforce for peace of mind and quality safety compliance? **Submit a contact form today to get a free trial.**

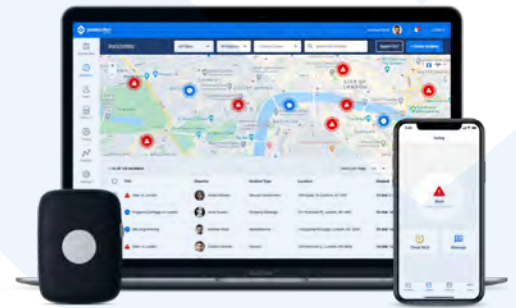
**GET A FREE TRIAL**

# About Vatix

We make digital tools that people use every day to supercharge their productivity and stay safe at work

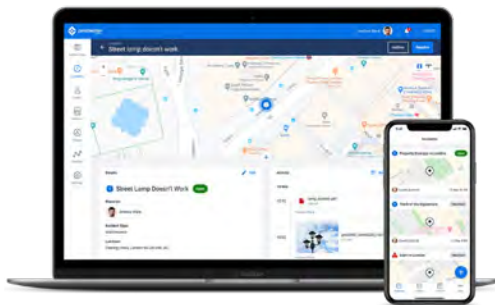
## Why We're Here

**The future of work doesn't work without the right tools.** The way we work is fundamentally changing to become more efficiency-driven, predictive and distributed. Most importantly, it's becoming more dependent on digital products to get work done and keep people safe.



## What We Do

We make intuitive, reliable and integrated tools that teams depend on every day.



## Where We're Going

**All-in-one solutions:** We plan to build on the success of lone worker safety and incident reporting by adding to our Protector suite of products which will continue to focus exclusively on keeping people safe at work. Future developments of Workflows will make it even more powerful for specific domains and use cases.