

Safety Guide for lone workers

Increasingly we are faced with situations in which the worker must make working alone, either throughout their work day or part of it. The regulatory obligations and the performances on the subject of prevention which the employer must carry out are the same whether we are talking about workers who carry out their activity in the company as for those who perform her solo work, except in some aspects.

In this guide we focus only on those aspects that represent a difference between making the workplace accompanied by or under supervision, and do it alone, and that we should not overlook that the employer is obliged to implement the preventive measures laid down by the Law exactly like that for the rest of the workers, by performing specific actions for this group of workers, as we collect here.

Through this guide we want to deepen in all aspects related to the security of the lone workers.

Here the employer you will find the items that will help you to implement the security measures most appropriate for the protection of their lone workers.

Definition

Given the wide variety of work situations that can be included under this heading, it is necessary to define what we mean by work in isolation.

Regardless of the work that will be done, we can consider that a person is working in solitary when that work is done in any environment where there are no other workers present that have knowledge of your work and the workplace, and therefore, are not available to respond effectively to the unusual events or emergencies that may occur.

Generally, the people who perform these jobs does not have visual contact with other people, and often cannot hear or be heard without the use of devices (telephone, intercom, etc.)

This definition does not imply that a worker has to work a full shift in solitude to be qualified as a worker in solitary. The definition can be applied to short periods in a work shift, perhaps only 10 or 15 minutes.

For those cases in which the situation of isolation is not permanent, it is necessary to establish a minimum amount of time from which it is considered that the work is done in isolation. Generally, this minimum time is often set at a time, although for hazardous jobs can be minutes.

Generally considered to be solo works those who, by reasons hourly (night work, weekend work) or organizational (management of industrial data confidential, monitoring of processes or work centers, transportation, sales, maintenance, etc.), are developed by a single person.

Some examples of Workers in solitary

Workers alone in fixed establishments:

- When a single person working in the establishment, as for example in the case of small shops, petrol stations and employees of the home.
- Drivers of car rental companies and companies of parcel shipping.
- Workers who exercise their functions separately from their peers in factories, warehouses, some research centers or training, fairs or recreation centers.
- People who work outside of normal working hours, as are the workers cleaning, security, some production positions, staff of maintenance or repair, etc.
- Workers who perform their job functions by teleworking, and therefore, working at a different location from your office.

'Mobile' workers who move to perform their functions:

- Conductors and drivers.
- In construction, plant installation, maintenance and cleaning work, electrical repairs, repair of elevators, painting and decorating, vehicle maintenance, etc.
- Work of agriculture and forestry
- Service Workers: collectors, postmen, social workers, therapists and caregivers in the home, home healthcare nurses, workers of pest control, drivers, engineers, architects, real estate agents, commercial, and similar professional visiting centers of a commercial nature as a domestic, or works in construction.

What are the obligations of the company?

The Act provides that the employer must ensure the safety and health of workers at your service in all aspects related to the job. Therefore, it remains the responsibility of the entrepreneur as a safety of a worker in solo, working far, isolated or in another work environment.

How do you ensure the employer the safety of a worker in solitary?

The employer must ensure the establishment of safe working conditions for workers in solitary, should not be different from the organization of the security the rest of the workers. The employer needs to know the law and the standards that apply to your business.

Therefore, the employer must:

- Identify the hazards in the work.
- Evaluate the risks they pose.
- Design and implement a security plan for the work to ensure that the risks are eliminated or controlled.
- Provide the necessary material means the worker to ensure the rapid response of the emergency services in case of need.

An entrepreneur should not ask a person who works alone, unless:

- Have been carried out training courses for all workers involved in the solo works.
- Plans have been designed for the prevention of risks in those conditions of work.

At this point we must remember that there are some jobs that must be done in the company, i.e. , by at least two people, one doing the work and the other monitored. Therefore, should not be performed by workers never isolated:

- Work in or near low-voltage conductors.
- Work involving the entry into confined spaces (such as a storage tank or a trench)
- Work on a ladder that requires a point of support.
- Young people who work with machinery recognized as dangerous, they should work under the supervision of expert people in its use.
- There are also other specifications to be met to prevent perform a solo work when there are obvious risks (such as, for example, in the monitoring of vehicles carrying certain explosives).

In addition, it should be noted that when a worker moves to a new work center to develop its functions, shall be informed by the employer for whom you must work on the risks you face.

How to identify the hazards and risks associated with the solo work

The potential dangers and risks to which workers may be exposed, the in performing tasks in solitary can be divided into three groups: security risks, risks of origin and psychosocial risks of violence at work referring to those that may exist a exposure to violent situations.

Before playing the job the employer shall assess whether it is feasible to do the solo work is necessary or play along to another colleague. To that end, we must perform an analysis of the job that discard the option mentioned above and make it viable the realization of the solo work.

In addition, it will have to assess the possible intervention protocols in cases of damage to the health of the worker, potential security risks, violence in the workplace and to foster the communication to avoid the outcropping of psychosocial risks of origin that may affect the worker in the performance of their duties. In the event that it is feasible that the worker perform solo works, you will need to pay special attention to the work planning (shifts, machinery work places, exposure to violent situations, etc.)

1. How do I identify security risks?

When the worker is subjected to a situation of isolation and plays her solo work, in the event of being exposed to a situation of risk or danger, the damage suffered by the worker may become worse due to the lack of supervision or company of the worker.

We may find ourselves in situations in which the worker diminished their health by circumstances, even outside the work. It is in these situations when immediate action is needed to provide relief to the affected employee. In the absence of a rapid intervention worker, generally, affected their health to a greater extent than in the posts where a person works accompanied by or under supervision.

When working alone if the intervention is poor or even no longer arrive on time, the solo work represents an increase of risk. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate those risks, such as those that exist in the workplace, the state of the machinery, tools, etc, which might entail an increase in risk to the worker by the mere fact of working in isolation.

2. How do I identify psychosocial risks?

In situations of solo work we may find ourselves with a psychological burden it can manifest itself with a feeling of isolation and anxiety. It can happen that the people who work in a situation of isolation have episodes of physical and intellectual fatigue resulting from the situation of solitude to which they are subject, and may lead to situations of stress, adding a risk to the existing ones .

The major psychosocial risks that can produce working alone are:

- Alterations of the behaviors of the worker, which can cause some emotional imbalance.
- Stress, due to the absence of other workers and for the realization of monotonous work, which can produce automatic and therefore, a lower control of the risks and even altering the perception of time.
- Need to resort to the experience of the worker due to the lack of training and information, and may react in the wrong way to a critical situation.

3. How do I identify the risks of violence at work?

There are other risk factors that should also be taken into account by the employer to the hour of appoint and evaluate the solo works. In some sectors, such as in the private security or those related to trade, it is possible that the workers in solitary will face situations of violence (robberies, confrontations with violent people, etc.)

On the other hand, another factor to take into account by the employer is the presence of women working alone. This situation can occur, for example, in the sectors of domestic service, commercial, home sales, blockbuster and even workers trade sector.

By the special connotations of both risk factors, has been considered necessary to treat separately in the following points:

3.1. The threat of violence while working alone.

Employers have a legal responsibility to prevent violent attacks against their employees in accordance with the standards of safety and health at work. Employers must develop policies to address the problem of violence in the workplace through the assessment and planning of occupational hazards, which identify the particularity that the work is performed in solo and the risks increase and that this situation

Can lead, as well as through the protocols for working against the violence in the workplace and the training and information for workers, taking into account the fact that workers perform their functions in solitary.

3.2. Women working alone.

As we talked about earlier, many women work alone and may face risks of violent assault, as well as to situations of sexual harassment, with or without violence.

When these circumstances should be identified through the assessment and planning of risk the existence or not, of risk to the worker in violent situations in the workplace, including sexual harassment. Once identified the risks the employer must take appropriate preventive measures (establishing the need for the work to be carried out together with, through training and information, appropriate means of monitoring, media, etc).

What preventive measures should be taken?

1. Security-related measures

Included here are the risks associated with the workplace, the state of the machinery, tools, stationery, etc. It is understood that the above elements are properly identified and have taken the necessary preventive measures, doing only emphasis on those aspects most determinants to avoid damage to the health of people who have to work alone.

- Activities considered of high risk: such as work in confined spaces, danger by electrical hazard, work in explosive atmospheres, and/or with the risk of fire must be applied the security protocols and intervention to reduce the risk to the maximum.
- Storage of products: Check the storage of products in safe areas which do not involve a danger to the safety of the worker who develops their tasks alone. Establish places with restricted access or that the storage of the products meet all the conditions of security to prevent a possible accident.
- Mobile Elements: should be avoided to the extent possible the access of workers in a situation of isolation to the areas where mobile machinery.

- Fixed Elements: Be certain that the machines have fixed or stationary devices and security locks required, as well as the correct operation of the emergency stop device
- Lighting of the areas of work: you must assess the lighting of the workplace as a poor lighting can cause a greater feeling of loneliness. You should avoid potential glare as well as problems in the visibility, since these factors can cause a greater psychological impact on the worker and increase the risks that may be exposed.
- Places of Work: In the areas of work where the operator is in a situation of isolation must take account of the possible risks of drop in height and falls at the same level. As well as determine which are the safe areas of access and avoid those that pose a danger to the integrity of the worker.
- Noise level: An important factor to consider is the level of existing noise. A high level of noise worker may make it impossible to listen to an abnormality in the development of their work, as well as the time to perceive the different sounds that must meet a person who works alone.
- Work Teams: must be taken into account that the work equipment meet all the necessary elements of security and that the operator performs its tasks with all the guarantees for your safety and health.

2. Measures of psychosocial nature

As a result of an assessment carried out and in accordance with established standards of risk control should be pose a series of preventive actions required to reduce the presence of psychosocial risk factors and minimize the adverse effects on the health by exposure to work in isolation.

For those risk factors that cannot be eliminated and causing a danger, you will need to define a series of actions by management and prevention of psychosocial risks, taking into account that we are dealing with workers who perform their roles in solitary.

These actions must be developed with a global perspective of the needs of the organization and raise through the planning of the preventive activity actions to eliminate the risks and the order of priority.

Preventive measures to be introduced are:

- Physical and psychological stress in the work: it is essential to implement technical and organizational measures to eliminate the burden of work because of the characteristics of the same can occur an increase in the risk factors.
- Conditions of the worker: To play this work you will need to know the task, be qualified to perform these functions, have experience in similar positions and knowledge of the work teams that go to use. You must also assess the ability of adaptation to this type of work from a physical point of view as well as the psychological health status that allows them to adapt to adverse situations while working in isolation.

- Links: must be promoted interpersonal relationships between workers who will occupy the same number of jobs and develop their activity in the same turn. It is recommended to encourage cordial relations between the commands and the person who carry out work of loneliness.
- Training and Information: You must be able to provide information on the post and psychosocial risk factors derived from the activity. The training that they receive the workers will have to adapt to the functions and physical and psychological characteristics of the worker and will take into account the specific conditions of the post.

3. Measures of risks of violence

The best way to act in this regard is that employers and employees work together to decide what to do in these situations. Seven points are proposed to develop a plan:

- Find out if there is a problem.
- Record all incidents.
- Classify all the incidents.
- Search for the preventive measures.
- Decide what to do.
- Implement the preventive measures.
- Check that these measures are effective.

3.1. Measures for the threat of workplace violence

During the course of its work, the workers alone are clearly at risk, especially if handled or have access to the money-box, in the sectors of trade or transport (workers of the lockers), as well as in the sectors of private security, and should be considered also the risk that a person with violent or criminal intentions might be able to discover the home address of the employee.

All employers must develop policies for the prevention of violence against the staff, in consultation with the delegates of prevention of occupational risks in this area. Should be made clear procedures for notification of incidents, including near misses and suspicious situations, as well as training and precise instructions for all employees who may be exposed to this risk.

These policies should include provisions to establish long-term care services to cope with the consequences of possible violence in the workplace.

3.2. Measures for women working alone

These risks should be carefully evaluated by the employer who will introduce the necessary measures to minimize the possibility of assault or sexual harassment. These could include special training and/or the provision of special equipment, as well as the need to maintain regular contact with the women that work in isolation.

When women traveling alone in the course of their work, employers must ensure that they have been trained in the general precautions should be taken when using public transport and parking lots. In some cases it may be necessary to install a telephone for car or an emergency device specific.

Women should not be forced to expose themselves to risks during the course of its work, therefore, the employer must advise you use the safest means of transport, as well as the methods of work safer. For example, if necessary for the sake of ensuring the safety, the employer must advise the use of taxis at the expense of the company on the part of the employed.

What actions must be carried out in cases of emergency or first aid?

Protocols should be made for action in case of emergency or first-aid applied specifically for the solo works.

These protocols should take into account a assistance and rapid and effective intervention, considering the maximum periods granted to provide first aid in function of the likely damage suffered by the workers who provide their services to lonely.

In the TABLA DE TIEMPOS specified time limits for providing first aid in case of any accident and in the TABLA DE MEDIDAS DE SEGURIDAD sets out the steps to implement depending on the type of work.

The measures and information covered in the tables above, should help shape a plan to ensure the media assistance and immediate assistance to the workers alone. There are three aspects that must be addressed in the plan: personal contact, the technical means of alarm and the availability of immediate relief (internal and external).

- Attention in case of emergency: It is essential that a worker has a system of direct care in the event that can occur an emergency or an accident while working in conditions of loneliness.
- Emergency warning systems: systems perform warning devices such as the loss of verticality or loss of movement to communicate a potential emergency situations that may be suffering from the worker.
- Personal Communication: to establish systems of instant communication via telephone, alarm, etc. , so that it can communicate any anomaly that detected in the workplace or to communicate any danger in that you can be involved.

What is the control and supervision of the people who work alone?

Due to the special features of the solo work, there is a clear need to control and monitor the individuals working alone to ensure your safety.

The regulations for the prevention of occupational hazards, establishes the figure of the preventative action, to perform tasks of supervision and control in the workplace. Presence will be necessary the presence in the work center of preventive resources, whatever the mode of organization of these resources, in the following cases:

1. When the risks may be aggravated or modified in the development of the process or activity, the concurrency of various operations that develop successively or simultaneously and make it necessary that the Control of the correct application of the methods of work.
2. When carrying out activities or processes that regulations are considered hazardous or with special risks.
3. When the need for such presence may be required for the Inspection of Labor and Social Security, if the circumstances of the case so require due to working conditions detected.

As an extension to the above, we will discuss those cases in which resources are needed due to preventive activities or processes that are performed are statutorily considered hazardous:

1. Work with particularly serious risks of falling from a height, by the particular characteristics of the activity, the procedures followed, or the working environment.
2. Work with risk of entombment or sinking.
3. Activities in the used machines that do not have EC declaration of conformity to be their date of marketing prior to the requirement of such a statement with binding, which are of the same type as those for which the regulations on the placing of machines requires the involvement of a notified body in the certification procedure, when the protection of the worker is not sufficiently guaranteed however have taken the regulatory enforcement actions.
4. Work in confined spaces. To these effects, it is understood by the confined space site with limited entrance and exit openings and unfavourable natural ventilation, in which contaminants can accumulate toxic or flammable or there may be an atmosphere deficient in oxygen, and that is not designed for continuous occupation by workers.
5. Work with risk of drowning, except for the work in immersion with underwater equipment.

Therefore and as was commented at the beginning of this guide, this type of work should never be regarded as solo works, because there must always be a preventative action present while they develop.

In all other cases of solo works, it is important to ensure adequate supervision, as it can help ensure that workers understand the risks associated with their work and take the necessary safety precautions while working as a solo artist. Supervisors may also provide guidance on how to act in situations of uncertainty.

It is desirable to undertake regular visits to the facilities where there are individual workers and develop discussions on health and safety issues that arise.

It may be necessary for the workers they are accompanied by the principle to their place of work, especially when:

1. It is of new employees.

2. That are forming in this post.
3. Who need to make a work that present special risks.
4. Having to deal with special situations.

The level of supervision necessary is a decision of the employer and must be based on the results of the risk assessment. The higher the risk, the higher the level of supervision required. It should not be left to the election of the workers if they want to receive help in this regard.

It should put in place procedures to control the workers alone to ensure that they continue to work in safe conditions. These may include:

- Regular visits to monitor the individuals that work in isolation.
- Regular contacts between the solitary worker and the supervisor using appropriate safety devices.
- Use of automatic fire alarm devices that work if certain signals by the worker alone are not received regularly.
- Use of other devices intended to give the alarm in the case of an emergency and that are operated manually or automatically by the absence of activity.
- Check that the lone worker return to its base or to your home after the completion of a task.

In all the situations described above there should be a provision of appropriate means to ensure that in case of need, the worker alone can initiate contact with their supervisors or colleagues. These means must ensure the establishment of contact with the worker alone at any time.

The higher the risk that you face in a solitary worker, the greater should be the degree of supervision by your employer.

The employer should never leave the worker that decide whether it should be supervised or not.

Main questions to identify the risks of working in solitary

In general, the employer should ask the following questions to identify the potential hazards of solo work:

How can the risks that entails working alone be handled by a single person, this is the first and most important question that the employer must respond, because first of all, whenever possible, avoid the person to perform solo works.

1. Risks of the job

- Does the job to develop involves special risks for workers in lonely, as for example the use of dangerous machines (forklift, etc.), atmospheres with chemical fumes, fire hazards, etc.?
- Are there any automatic detectors of fire and automatic extinguishing systems?

- Is there a safe way to enter and exit to a single worker? Have you studied the inclusion of computer systems to identify the worker in the entry? How do you access securely with any tool of temporary work that is necessary, such as portable ladders, and be handled safely by a single person? For example, in the case of a worker who perform work in a cold store, is there anti-trapping systems or notice from the inside of the camera?
- How Can all the installations, substances and the goods involved in the work will be handled safely by a single person? We must consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or if you need more than one person to operate the essential controls to ensure the safe operation of the equipment.
- If the computers for temporary use, such as stairs or easels can be used safely by a single person, what would happen if the workers fall?
- Can you all the necessary facilities, equipment and substances used be used safely by a single person? In particular, can a single person safely operate essential controls including emergency stop devices of the used equipment?
- Does the job involves lifting and handling of loads that are too heavy or too difficult to handle for a single person?
- Does the work involves the handling of cash/contact with the public where there is a greater risk of violence? Is there any risk of workplace violence in solitary? (For example, it is advisable ask ourselves if it keeps money in cash on site, why are there is likely to come into contact with people who may become violent and is there contact with persons whose access may not be carefully controlled?)
- Are there any particular problems in the workplace, which could lead to an accident, for example, slippery floors, poor lighting, etc. ?
- What are the physical and mental demands to the worker in solitaire are within reasonable limits, for example, is not expected to work on too many production lines or to check too many processes at the same time.
- What are the women especially at risk if working alone?
- What Are young workers, especially in a situation of risk whether they work alone?
- What has been taken into account the physical state and the medical history of the person at the time of designated to perform a solo work?
- What is the duration of the work shift?
- Has there been any consideration of the safety in the transportation to and from the workplace?

2. Emergency Situations

- What have been taken into account the foreseeable emergency situations such as: fires, diseases, accidents, equipment failure, etc.?
- Do workers alone have access to first aid? Is it necessary to make the mobile workers carry a first aid kit?
- How can the workers alone hear the evacuation alarm if it sounds?
- Are there clear procedures to turn off and the worker is able to escape the place with security? Are there mechanisms to ensure that workers alone have been evacuated to except in case of emergency?
- What is checked that the workers alone are able to work on their own? Do you have any disease (epilepsy, etc.) that could increase the risks?
- What would happen if a worker fell ill in solitary or collapsed during your work?

- When persons external to the company, related to the maintenance or repair of equipment they are doing jobs non-routine repair, do they take additional precautions to ensure that the equipment is isolated and that maintenance personnel and other workers do not have additional risks?
- Have they put in place systems for notification of the problems that may occur to the worker in his work?

3. Training

- Do you have clear procedures have been established to identify which work can be done alone and which not? What Are workers in solitary informed about when they should stop work and seek help?
- What do these procedures extend to the foreseeable circumstances that may occur in the workplace, for example, broken machinery, obstruction of a line?
- Do workers alone have received special training to ensure they understand what is expected of them when working alone?
- Does the training included how to contact the support services or emergency in case you need it?
- Is there a system to monitor that the training has been effective and the worker knows how to respond to his work in both normal and emergency predictable?
- If the worker alone account with specialized equipment, such as alarm devices in cases of emergency, do you give training in its use?
- Has there been adequate training to deal with emergencies in unusual situations related to the violence (robbery)?

4. Monitoring

- What level and type of monitoring is necessary?
- Is there a system for periodic monitoring of workers in solitary for example, visual inspections by the supervisor, at regular intervals, or the regular contact, by phone or radio in the event that the device for an automatic alert does not receive specific signals regularly by the worker alone?
- In case of need, does the worker alone has at its disposal an alarm that you can use to ask for help?
- Is there a possibility that in the center of work there is an alarm that is active in the absence of activity on the part of the worker alone?
- What is the staff that is expected to respond to alarms given by the workers as a solo artist is properly trained for the prompt response to these situations?
- For the staff that works outside of the workplace, is there an itinerary of its planned route, a system is to call at regular intervals or at least the end of their shift? What are equipped with radios, mobile phones or other systems to communicate with your database in case of emergency?

5. Welfare

- What do lone workers have access to sanitation and washing facilities?
- Are there mechanisms to make sure they have access to the rest periods / breaks when they need?
- Do you have access to the same type of dining facilities or meal breaks that other workers?



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