



Science and
Technology
Facilities Council

LONE WORKING

STFC Safety Code No 1

Rev. 1.05, Issued December 2022

Revisions

Issue No	Details of revision	Date
1.0	Launch	June 2016
1.01	Scope reference to lone working with young/vulnerable people	April 2017
1.02	Minor change to reflect SHE Assure launch	October 2018
1.03	Minor change to reflect Evotix Assure name change	April 2022
1.04	Update to reflect audit findings including changes to Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, Appendix 1 & Appendix 2	October 2022
1.05	Minor change to Appendix 2 to cross-reference SC24	December 2022

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STFC

Lone Working

1. Purpose

The demands of scientific experimentation, and technology development/testing often result in STFC staff and others working alone. Lone working does not always occur in isolated locations. Such work can occur at any time during the working routine and can be associated with long or extended working hours or working out of normal working hours including weekend/bank holiday working. This is a natural part of the culture associated with scientific endeavour, cutting edge technology development, operating facilities, or delivering 24/7 services.

In these circumstances the safety controls, support and communication channels present when working alongside colleagues for example in the event of a fire, equipment failure, illness or injury, may be different or absent and need to be considered. Fatigue is an extra factor to be considered when working long or extended hours, in particular out of normal working hours.

Examples where specific care should be taken include:

- handling biological, flammable or toxic materials;
- working with asphyxiants or in areas with oxygen depletion systems;
- significant manual handling activities;
- working “on call”;
- working at height;
- work with high pressure systems; or
- working in high temperatures or outdoors in extreme weather conditions.

The STFC has a duty under general Health & Safety legislation:

- the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act, 1974 (as amended);
- the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999 (as amended);
- the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations, 1981 (as amended); and
- the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, 2005;

to identify workplace hazards and assess their risks - lone working increases the likelihood and potential severity of any incident due to the absence of immediate assistance. This must be considered within **any** risk assessment.

This code outlines STFC policy with respect to lone working such that risks are minimised, and is summarised in Appendix 1. Lone workers should not be put at significantly more risk than those working with others.

2. Scope

This Code applies to STFC staff whether working on STFC sites or elsewhere and to contractors, visitors, tenants and facility users working at STFC managed sites.

This code does **not** apply to STFC staff undertaking informal “home working” but **does apply** to those staff for whose contract of employment stipulates home working (including “on call”).

This code does not cover the hazards associated with travelling alone on Council business, see STFC SHE Code 8: Travel on Council business.

This code does not address the hazards that can be associated with 'lone working' with young or other vulnerable persons, for example work experience students. Specific health and safety guidance for work experience supervisors can be found [here](#), alongside site specific work experience supervisor handbooks based on the STFC HR '[Safeguarding policy](#)'.

Related SHE codes and policies:

- STFC SHE Code 3: Safe use of cryogenic materials.
- STFC SHE Code 4: Safety and safe use of work equipment on the provision and use of work equipment.
- STFC SHE Code 6: Risk Management.
- STFC SHE Code 37: COSHH - Safe use of chemicals / hazardous substances
- STFC SHE Code 9: Working at height.
- STFC SHE Code 11: Work in confined spaces
- STFC SHE Code 15: Management of contractors
- STFC SHE Code 16: Biological Safety.
- STFC SHE Code 22: Working with lasers
- STFC SHE Code 26: Safe use of lifting equipment and lifting accessories.
- STFC SHE Code 34: Electrical safety.
- STFC SHE Code 37: COSHH

3. Definitions

3.1 Lone working

Lone working takes place when an individual works in such circumstances that their location is not known by others, and they have neither visual nor audible communication with someone (an STFC employee or other person) who can summon assistance or provide first aid in the event of an accident or illness.

Lone working can be planned but can also arise inadvertently through the unanticipated departure of colleagues during normal working hours or at the end of the working day.

Lone working may be found in a wide range of situations, for example:

- Those working alone on STFC sites, e.g., in small workshops laboratories, experimental hutches, clean rooms, restricted access facilities, offices, estates plant rooms;
- Those working alone at non STFC sites, e.g., NERC MST radar facility Aberystwyth or indeed any collaborative partner laboratory;
- Those working out of normal working hours, for example when called in "on call";
- Contractors engaged on STFC sites undertaking various activities; or
- Facility users or staff from other departments working within an area where the host department may not directly interact at a team level.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Departmental Directors shall:

- 4.1.1 Ensure that lone working is actively considered as part of all risk assessments undertaken by their staff, establishing the culture and limits within which lone working is acceptable, see Appendix 1. This should include all physical, chemical and biological hazards where lone working may increase the risk to a lone individual.

Where there are mandated site-based systems for managing lone working Directors should ensure that their staff and those that work with them on STFC sites are aware of and follow the site-based controls.

4.2 Line managers and Supervisors shall:

- 4.2.1 Ensure that all documented risk assessments consider the hazards arising from lone working. Risk Assessment must be based upon the standards defined in Appendix 1, guidance in Appendix 2, and must address access to first aid, medical and fire services, and other foreseeable emergency situations.
- 4.2.2 Ensure that, where there is no prior risk assessment (for example when staff are called out when “on-call”) and lone working is likely, a risk assessment is prepared to cover the expected range of lone working for those staff.
- 4.2.3 Ensure that tenants, facility users or visitors under their responsibility undertaking lone working are informed of any site or facility controls for lone working.
- 4.2.4 Ensure, through periodic inspection, that lone working controls established in risk assessment and method statements are implemented by their staff and those working for them on STFC sites, for example visiting scientists, facility users etc.

4.3 Contract Supervising Officers shall:

- 4.3.1 Ensure that where work on STFC sites is managed by contractors that the hazards associated with contractor staff undertaking lone working are considered in their risk assessments and method statements, and as appropriate they are made aware of site based lone working systems.
- 4.3.2 Ensure, through periodic supervision, that lone working controls established in risk assessments and method statements are implemented by contractors.

4.4 Staff, tenants, contractors, facility users or visitors shall:

- 4.4.1 Discuss with their line manager, or other person responsible for their safety, the need for lone working prior to embarking on such work. Inform colleagues and those responsible for monitoring site or facility occupancy when working alone, for example site security or those manning facility control rooms.
- 4.4.2 Comply with the local procedures and controls for lone working defined in risk assessments, systems of work or method statements.
- 4.4.3 Inform the person responsible for their safety if they have any medical condition that may affect their ability to work safely alone. For example epilepsy, low blood pressure, heart conditions.
- 4.4.4 Report all incidents relating to lone working to their line manager and through Evotix Assure following SHE Code 5 - Incident Reporting and Investigation.

5. References

- 5.1 Working alone: Health and safety guidance on the risks of lone working, HSE information leaflet INDG73.

Appendix 1. STFC Lone Working Standards

Lone workers should not be put at significantly more risk than those working with others. This appendix sets out the minimum controls to be employed when undertaking risk assessments and managing work where lone working is necessary. These do not apply in emergency situations where life is at risk.

Lone working must not be undertaken where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the work might result in a SHE Incident.

Special attention should be paid to assessing the risk for the following classes of personnel working alone, these are:

- Individuals for whom Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) are required (SC32 – Fire and Emergency Management). Such individuals should not undertake lone working unless the controls detailed in the PEEP can be provided at all times; and
- Personnel under 19 years of age.

	Activity
Lone working permitted	Standard office work or IT use, experimental data manipulation/ analysis and movement around site. Routine inspections/tours conducted out of hours for example by site security; estates teams; or those manning scientific facilities.
Lone working permitted Subject to: lone working controls detailed in Risk Assessments , including the provision of either automatic lone worker monitoring / alarm system; or systems of periodic (at least hourly) contact established through visits, telephone or radio communication etc.	Familiar/normal/routine laboratory or workshop operations that have been assessed as having low risk, where the direct presence of co-workers is not a prescribed, or universally anticipated active control measure
Lone working NOT permitted	Work in confined spaces or areas where there is a potential risk of asphyxiation or exposure to toxic gases. A factor in determining areas where there is a potential risk of asphyxiation may be the presence of oxygen depletion or toxic gas monitoring systems/alarms which do not fail safe automatically isolating the source of the hazard see STFC SHE Code 11: Work in confined spaces and STFC SHE Code 3: Safe use of cryogenic materials. Working at or near exposed live LV and HV electrical conductors, see STFC SHE Code 34: Electrical safety. Live culture microbiology involving pathogens above Hazard Group 2, see STFC SHE Code 16: Biological Safety - unless contained within suitably assessed Microbiological Safety Cabinet (BioCoSHH required). Work at height, see STFC SHE Code 9: Working at height. Working involving certain classes of work equipment to be determined by risk assessment, see STFC SHE Code 4: Safety and safe use of work equipment on the provision and use of work equipment, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the use of ladders which cannot be secured and require footing (this does not include step ladders below 1.5m in height); • Working at height utilising fall arrest equipment • the erection of scaffolding; and

- Workshop machinery unless subject to Senior Line Manager reviewed Risk Assessment (SC6);
- Work in labs or workshops by apprentices or work experience students; or
- Persons where lone working may increase risk to health or safety through underlying health conditions.

Complex lifting operations, see STFC SHE Code 26: Safe use of lifting equipment and lifting accessories;

Unfamiliar/non routine work with class 3b or 4 lasers, see STFC SHE Code 22: Working with lasers; or

Work in laboratories or workshops by apprentices or work experience students.

It is not possible to detail all chemicals and their toxicity levels for which lone working would be a significant hazard. Such chemicals widely exist at non-toxic levels in their pure form, as complex materials, compounds, mixtures and in chemical processes/reactions, and are subject to the controls detailed in STFC SHE Code 37: COSHH.

The following conditions for chemical lone working are necessarily a pragmatic compromise:

Lone working is prohibited with the following chemicals and their functional derivatives, where they are or could be encountered at levels where they can cause harm, unless the COSHH risk assessments for working with these chemicals has been subject to review by an independent competent person approved by SHE Group.

Specific chemicals:

- Carbon Monoxide (CO);
- Cyanide (CN);
- Arsenic (As);
- Fluorine gas (F);
- Hydrofluoric Acid (HF); and
- Chromium Cr(VI);

Chemicals whose Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) include the following GHS hazard and precautionary statements:

- H200: Unstable explosive;
 - H201: Explosive; mass explosion hazard;
 - H202: Explosive: severe projection hazard;
 - H203: Explosive: fire, blast or projection hazard;
 - H204: Fire or projection hazard;
 - H240: Heating may cause explosion;
 - H241: Heating may cause a fire or explosion;
 - H300: Fatal if swallowed;
 - H304: May be fatal if swallowed;
 - H310: Fatal in contact with skin;
 - H314: Causes severe skin burns and eye damage;
 - H318: Causes serious eye damage;
 - H330: Fatal if inhaled.
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- P310: Immediately call a POISON CENTRE/Doctor;
 - P311: Call a POISON CENTRE/Doctor;
 - P312: Call a POISON CENTRE/Doctor;
 - P315: Get immediate medical advice/attention;
 - P340: Remove person to fresh air and keep comfortable breathing; and

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• P361: Take off immediately all contaminated clothing. |
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Appendix 2. Guidance for undertaking risk assessments including lone working

Where there is deemed to be a requirement for lone working, consideration of these hazards should be included in the written risk assessment of the activity.

Undertaking the risk assessment should involve managers, supervisors, as appropriate safety representatives and most importantly those undertaking the activity.

Questions that should be asked include:

- 1) Can the hazards be eliminated, or reduced to a tolerable level?
- 2) Does the activity have to be carried out by a person alone? Or out of hours? Can the programme be adjusted to avoid the need for lone working? Can additional resources be employed to ensure the activity is completed at a time that avoids the need for lone working?
- 3) What are the inherent hazards - can they be effectively controlled? Can particularly hazardous activities be timetabled to avoid the need for lone working?
- 4) Are there clearly defined procedures for the hazardous tasks being undertaken alone?
- 5) Is the person competent to undertake the planned activities alone – do they have sufficient training, experience and understanding of the activities to be undertaken?
- 6) Are suitable and sufficient controls in place to facilitate lone working?
 - a) Do they have sufficient understanding of:
 - what to do in the event of an emergency (emergency escape routes;
 - emergency procedures); access to first aid;
 - access to Personal Protective Equipment; and
 - is the equipment designed to be used by a single person?
 - b) Have the following supervision and communication methods or their equivalent been considered for lone workers to summon help in the event of an emergency
 - Full time supervision;
 - Periodic supervision;
 - Buddy system - where two or more individuals working in separate areas make arrangements, defined in the risk assessment, to check in with each other at predefined intervals without compromising their personal safety. Particular attention should be given to communicating when lone working is created through the departure of one or more individuals from an area – “the last but one to leave”;
 - External buddy – where a lone worker makes arrangements to check-in, at regular intervals defined in the risk assessment, with a colleague who is remote and who will raise the alarm if contact is not made;
 - Two way radio contact;
 - Remote manual or automatic alarm system: personal motion sensors, panic alarms, etc. Examples of such systems are Oysta Pearl at RAL, or SBES Lifesaver at Daresbury.
 - Systems such as emails or mobile ‘apps’ where verified contact is not rigorously enforced are not preferred, and should only be used with extreme caution.

- 7) What are the lone working provisions for:
- Medical emergencies and the provision of first aid or treatment of injuries; or
 - Response to fire alarms or other foreseeable emergency situations.

Specific consideration should be given to areas where access may be restricted for example where key pad door access has been installed which could prevent access of emergency services in the event of an incident or classified or controlled radiation areas.

- 8) Do the individuals undertaking lone working have any medical conditions for which there would be increased risks in the event of a fire, equipment failure, injury etc., that need to be considered? For example: those at risk of a heart attack, epilepsy or other condition that would cause them to lose consciousness or prevent them from leaving a building in the event of a fire.

Staff with known medical conditions which may increase their risk during lone working should receive medical screening by Occupational Health to ensure they are able to perform lone working. See SHE Code 24: Health Surveillance and Health Screening Medicals.

- 9) What work or activities are being undertaken adjacent to or near the intended location of lone working, and what implications might this have to the work proposed?

Due consideration to all of the above points, including the application of the selected communication / supervision method should be addressed within the relevant risk assessment. For example phone, automatic alarm systems or 2 way radio network coverage, battery duration or power outage, or the co-protection of 2 lone workers working in tandem as 'buddies'

Appendix 3. Training

No specific training requirements for this code except a working knowledge of this code, and the on-line BiteSize presentation associated with it.

Appendix 4. Audit Checklist

Ref	Item	Rating	Comments
4.2.1	(a) Is lone working considered in those risk assessments where it takes place? (b) Are the risk assessments stored in Evotix Assure?		
4.2.2	Where staff are "on call" do risk assessments consider their lone working?		
4.2.3	Are tenants, facility users etc. informed of the lone working arrangements?		
4.2.4	Where lone working controls are established, is there evidence that they have been tested?		
4.3.1	Where contractors undertake lone working, are their controls detailed in their risk assessments?		
4.4.1	Is lone working by staff or others discussed with line managers/those responsible for an area prior to being undertaken?		
4.4.3	Have staff and others notified their manager or those responsible for an area where they have medical conditions that may affect their ability to work safely alone?		

Appendix 5. Record Retention

There are no record retention requirements for this code.