



# Loss Control Insight

## The Lone Worker

If you are one of the many employees who work alone either after hours or in remote locations, you may want to keep someone else aware of where you are and what you are doing.

### ***Are you at risk?***

The phrase "employees working alone" applies to virtually all workers who are performing a job function and are not in the presence of their employer, a person in a supervisory capacity, or another worker at the workplace location.

Every work-alone situation needs to be assessed to determine if there are any hazardous conditions or circumstances that would compromise your safety.

If you think you deal with dangerous situations, you may want to consult with your safety representative or supervisors for suggestions on monitoring and what can be done if an incident occurs.

Provide all the information you can about the hazards you might encounter. It is your responsibility to do your job in the most knowledgeable and safest manner possible, minimizing the possibility of an incident.

### ***How hazardous is your job?***

When assessing the conditions or circumstances you are required to work under by yourself, there will be certain job functions that have hazards associated with them. These functions can be categorized as high risk, low risk, or combinations of both.

High-risk job hazards include working with:

- High energy materials (radioactive, high temperature)
- Toxic gases, liquids, or solids
- Cryogenic (low temperature) materials/processes
- High pressure systems and high voltage electrical systems
- Moving equipment or machinery
- Handling or transferring flammable liquids

Working in:

- Extreme weather conditions
- Laboratory functions

- Service industries where job functions may not be hazardous but where cash or goods handled may cause the situation to attract criminal victimization
- Entering any confined space

### ***What can you do?***

If you believe that your job is one that puts you at risk of the hazards of working alone, there are methods you can present to your safety representative or supervisor that can help control the risks. All of these methods include obtaining emergency help when it is needed.

- Buddy system: Primarily used for working in confined spaces where entrance or exit is restricted, such as manholes, pits, or tanks that may be oxygen deficient or where there may be an accumulation of hazardous gases, vapors, or mists. The buddy must know about the activities of the worker being observed, be properly equipped with emergency equipment, and be capable of putting preplanned rescue or emergency operations into effect.
- Personal check: Someone checks on you at regular intervals.
- Periodic telephone contact: Communicating via the telephone at regularly scheduled intervals may be adequate in low-risk work-alone situations.
- Mechanical/electrical surveillance: Workplace security systems can often be modified so they will also monitor you if you are working alone, as well as the monitoring the workplace in general.
- Central monitoring: Your activities are monitored by a person or outside facility designated for that purpose.

### ***Working alone on the night-shift***

One of the reasons some people end up working alone is because they work the night shift. Often, during this shift, many of the other employees have gone home and you may find yourself alone or with no one in sight.

In this situation you have no one to remind you to wear your personal protective equipment, no one to talk to, and no one to help you if you are involved in a workplace incident. Checklists may help you remember to use your personal protective equipment. If you have a cellular phone, you may call someone to check in from time to time.

Workers on the night shift may be more prone to the risks of falling asleep. This is compounded when working alone because there is no one to talk to and interact with. Often the job functions are repetitive, which also adds to the risk of dozing.

Of course, this drowsiness creates a domino effect that can lead to higher risk of occupational hazards. When you are sleepy, your awareness level drops and your chances of seeing a problem in time decreases. It is important to get adequate rest.

Don't look at the attempts of your employer to protect you as an invasion of your privacy. The surveillance cameras and telephone calls are their way of helping to keep you safe.