

Elliott Nash Limited Lone Working Procedure (SHE 29)

Introduction

It is inevitable that at certain times Elliott Nash Limited employees and others will find themselves working alone. These situations can occur, for example, at the beginning and end of intensive working periods, during holidays, at night and at weekends.

Many employees work alone at some time during their working periods and in the majority of cases, they do so without significant risk. For example, persons working alone in offices carrying out typical office activities outside normal working hours are unlikely to be at significant risk provided the appropriate fire precautions are in place. However, there are occasions when it is not possible to devise arrangements for work to be done safely by one person. In these cases, alternative arrangements involving help or back-up have to be put in place.

Definition of a Lone Worker.

ENL have identified a lone worker is someone who has no visual or audible communication with another person who is capable of providing assistance without delay, should illness or injury occur.

The following type of Elliott Nash Limited job specifications may find themselves working alone at some time:

1. Maintenance worker
2. Site surveyor
3. Office manager

It is essential therefore that the potential hazards and risks associated with lone working are taken into account when risk assessments are carried out by Line Managers.

Risk Assessment

The risk assessment should identify all hazards, the risks associated and the control measures to be used when lone working is required.

Those tasks, which are deemed unacceptable to be performed by a lone worker under any circumstances, must be documented in the written record of risk assessment.

Any risk assessment and its resulting control measures must be discussed with the individuals concerned.

As with all risk assessments, the findings should be reviewed at reasonable intervals and in the light of experience. This requirement should be part of the ENL procedures generally.

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Hazards, which Lone Workers may face, include:

- Accidents or emergencies arising out of the work and the lack of first aid equipment.
- Fire.
- Unsafe access or egress.
- Equipment failure, MEWP's etc.
- Inadequate provision of rest, hygiene and welfare facilities.
- Violence from members of the public.
- Manual handling.
- Breakdown or other emergency whilst travelling as part of the working day
- Site Hazards, Mines, Excavations, Watercourses, Unstable Structures etc

Safe Working Arrangements for Lone Workers

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff. The obvious question that has to be asked is whether the risks of the work can be adequately controlled by one person, or are more people necessary?

Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than others who work together. Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. All situations where staff may be working alone should be identified and any additional risks, for example in the office, site or at a remote site, the following questions should be considered:

Is the person medically fit to work alone?

Check that lone workers have no medical conditions, which make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary. Consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies, which may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

Is the person competent and experienced enough to work alone?

Consider whether the person is sufficiently competent and experienced to work alone. Employees that are young, new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be supervised or accompanied at first.

Is there safe access and exit from the premises for that person?

In the evenings and at weekends, many doors, which provide an exit from buildings during normal working hours, are locked for security reasons. All means of escape required during normal working hours must be available wherever a person works in the building outside normal working hours. However, the mechanism for opening doors on exit routes may be different outside normal working hours. Has the lone worker been made aware that aspects of his/her route out of the building in an emergency may be different?

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Additional Considerations

- Can one person safely handle all the equipment required to undertake the job?
- Consider whether the work involves lifting objects too large for one person or whether more than one person is needed to operate essential controls for safe running of equipment.
- Is the person familiar with fire procedures, first aid and security arrangements and relevant codes of practice?
- Lone workers should know how to get out of the building in the event of a fire or other emergency. They should also know where the nearest first aid box is located and be familiar with the locking up/security procedures for the building.
- Are women especially at risk if they work alone?
- Are young workers especially at risk if they work alone?
- Does the lone worker have access to a telephone or mobile telephone?
- Are persons at risk when leaving the premises?

Training

Risk assessments will help to determine the level of training needed for each type of work.

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision in order to control, guide and help in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and therefore they need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced.

Supervision

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, there is still a duty on Elliott Nash Limited to provide appropriate control of the work. Supervision complements information, instruction and training and helps to ensure that employees and others understand the risks associated with their work and that the necessary safety precautions are carried out. It can also provide guidance in situations of uncertainty.

The extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work to identify and handle safety issues.

Whether or not to supervise an individual is a management decision; it should not be left to individuals to decide when and where they require assistance.

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Monitoring

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and include at least a check at the end of the working period (this may be via a reporting in system to colleagues, reception etc. In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

- Procedures where a member of management periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers.
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone workers and a manager is maintained using either a telephone or mobile phone.
- Automatic warning devices, which raise the alarm in an emergency and are activated by the absence of activity from the lone worker.
- Checks that a lone worker has returned to their base or home on completion of a task.
- The use of a nominated safety partner or “buddy” system (see below).

Use of a nominated safety partner or “buddy” system

This is a fairly basic system to minimise the likelihood of an employee being left unaided should something untoward happen to them.

Prior to anyone undertaking lone working, the following information should be made available to the nominated safety partner or buddy:

- Contact details e.g. mobile phone number.
- Agreed contact times or intervals and planned codes, if appropriate.
- Full details of itinerary and appointment details. This should include times of appointments as well as the names, addresses and telephone numbers of all persons to be visited.
- Expected time of return, allowing for reasonably foreseeable delays such as traffic congestion, and the fact that meetings, more often than not, overrun rather than finish early.
- Information on the route to be taken when travelling.
- Colour, make and registration number of the vehicle being used.
- Details of emergency personal contacts.

The lone worker should make contact with their safety partner at the agreed time or at agreed intervals to reassure them that they are OK. It is important that this includes arrangements for the last “report in” is to be after normal office hours. Should the lone worker be delayed at any stage they should ensure that they contact their safety partner and revise their itinerary and expected return time.

Should the lone worker fail to make contact the safety partner will try to contact the lone worker using the itinerary and other details provided by the lone worker. If contact can still not be made

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after a reasonable agreed length of time and the lone worker still has not reported in, then the Police should be contacted for advice.

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