Lone Working Guidance and Standard

(ref: H&S/0083)
**Policy Statement**

1.1 The Policy of the College* is to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of employees, students and others involved in lone working by eliminating effectively controlling, reducing and the risks arising from working alone in College premises.

(*College = Queen Mary, University of London)

2. **Legislation**

2.1 General duties under the Health & Safety at Work Act etc 1974 and specific duties under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require a formal assessment of any significant risks involved when a person needs, or wants, to work alone.

2.2 Certain activities as set out in the accompanying Guidance to this policy are prohibited from being carried out by person working alone.

3. **General Responsibilities**

3.1 The Heads of Departments, Schools or Institutes are responsible for the establishment and implementation of procedures to control, reduce and eliminate the risks arising from persons in their department, school or institute who work alone.

3.2 Staff and students are responsible for following and adhering to the procedures set out to control, reduce and eliminate the risks arising from working alone as detailed in the guidance below.

4. **Definitions**

4.1 Lone Worker:

For the purpose of this document, persons who have neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon assistance in the event of an accident or illness is considered to be a lone worker.

5. **Guidance**

5.1 Working Alone:

Because of the very large range of tasks carried out by staff and students in the College, it is impractical to set general prescriptive rules for lone working. For example, persons working alone in offices carrying out typical office activities outside normal working hours are unlikely to be at significant risk, provided adequate fire, security and communication precautions are in place whereas a person working alone in a laboratory is much more likely to be at significant risk. Appropriate arrangements involving help or back-up are therefore
much more likely to be required in the latter case. There are also certain work activities in which lone working is specifically prohibited.

5.2 Prohibitions on Working Alone:

Lone working must not be undertaken where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk that the work might result in an accident which would be sufficiently serious to require a second person to be available to summon help.

Those activities which it is thought that lone workers must not carry out under any circumstances must be documented in departmental risk assessments records.

Examples of work activities requiring more than one person are:

5.2.1 Entry into confined spaces

Confined spaces include tanks, manholes, pipes, flues, ducts, ceiling voids, enclosed basement rooms, dark rooms, cold rooms, and other spaces where there may be inadequate ventilation.

5.2.2 Use of ladders

Use of ladders which cannot be secured must be "footed" by a second person.

5.2.3 Scaffolding

When scaffolding or scaffolding towers are being erected or dismantled at least two people must be present.

5.2.4 Use of dangerous machinery

Persons are prohibited from working alone at the machines listed below, unless they have received sufficient training using the machines. Sufficient training, in the context of these machines, must include an appropriate period of instruction on the hazards associated with them, and the measures required to minimise the risks. The correct use of guards, safety devices and protective clothing where appropriate must be demonstrated. A written record of the training must be kept.

i. Woodworking machines
ii. Dough mixers
iii. Meat mincing machines
iv. Metal milling machines
v. Guillotine machines
vi. Slicing machines used in catering (both powered and manual)
vii. Hydraulic and pneumatic power presses
viii. Potato chipping machines
ix. Food mixing machines when used with attachments for mincing, slicing, chipping or any other cutting operations or for crumbling
x. High speed food centrifuges and liquidisers.

5.2.5 Work on or near live electrical conductors

Persons carrying out work on or near live electrical conductors be accompanied by another person. The Electricity at Work Regulations give the following examples of electrical work where it is advisable that the person carrying out the work should be accompanied:

i. Electrical work involving manipulation of live, un-insulated power conductors at above 240 volts using insulated tools.

ii. Other work on or near bare live conductors where a person working alone would not be capable of undertaking the work safely without assistance in, for example, keeping other persons from the work area.

6. Risk Assessment

6.1 Risk Assessments for Working Alone:

Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff or students. The first consideration is whether the risks associated with the activity can be adequately controlled by one person. Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than those who work in close proximity to or together with other persons.

Precautions should take account of normal working conditions and foreseeable emergency situations, e.g. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. All situations where staff and students may be working alone should be identified and the following questions asked.

i. Is lone working legally prohibited in the circumstances?

ii. Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker? For example, it is not generally reasonable for staff or students to work alone in workshops because there is usually dangerous machinery present. However, if only low risk work, such as assembly or some cleaning, were being planned, then provided other risks were minimised and a system of checking or line of communication established, then it would be reasonable for a person to work alone.
iii. Is there safe access and exit 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. The mechanism for opening doors on exit routes may be different outside normal working hours and all lone workers must therefore be made aware of exit routes and procedures for leaving the building.

iv. Can one person safely handle all the plant and equipment needed? It may be heavy, awkward, unstable, large, etc. More than one person may be necessary to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment.

v. Can all substances and materials involved in the work be handled safely by one person? The manipulation of hazardous substances, e.g. substances which are subject to the COSHH Regulations, flammable, cryogenic and radioactive materials, must be considered carefully. Substances that have, for example, the potential to cause severe acute injury, either alone or as a component of a reaction, to cause burns, or to affect the respiratory, cardiovascular, or central nervous system must be considered.

vi. Will cash be handled and will there be a significant risk of violence?

vii. Is the lone worker medically fit to work alone?

viii. Both routine work and foreseeable emergencies should be considered when assessing whether a person is medically fit to work alone. Emergencies may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual.

6.2 Training and Supervision:

Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations, and lone workers, therefore, need to understand the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced.

Departments should, therefore, establish clear procedures to set limits as to what can and cannot be done by lone workers, and, where appropriate, when lone workers should stop the work and seek advice.

Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision the College has a duty to provide appropriate control of the work. The extent of supervision required depends upon the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the person carrying out the work.
Persons new to a job, undergoing training, doing a job that presents special risks, or dealing with new situations must not work alone at first. The extent of supervision required is a management decision and it should not be left to individuals to decide when they require assistance.

Young persons, under 18 years of age must not work alone in College properties.

6.3 Accidents, emergencies and illness:

Lone workers should be physically and mentally capable of responding correctly in emergency situations.

Emergency procedures should be established and lone workers given clear and concise emergency instructions and training. Similar information should be given to contractors or service engineers who may be working alone.

Liaison with contractors is the responsibility of the Estates Department or the contracting department.

Suitable systems should be devised to monitor the conditions of lone workers and should include at least a check at the end of the working period.

In addition, it may be necessary to consider:

- Procedures where a member of supervisory staff periodically visits and visually monitors lone workers.
- Procedures where regular contact between the lone worker and a member of supervisory staff or the College Security is maintained.
- Automatic warning devices which raise the alarm in an emergency and are activated by the absence of activity from the lone worker.
- Suitable "signing in" systems.
## Document Control

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