

Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences (NDS) Lone working policy / standard and guidelines for risk assessment

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1. Introduction

Lone working is working in physical isolation from other individuals. This could be out of normal office hours when you may be the only worker within a specific laboratory or it could be within a normal day, where you may be spending significant periods of time within side rooms such as Tissue Culture Labs, Cold Rooms or Cryo-storage areas. In any case, when there is no other person within the immediate vicinity or more significantly within earshot, then the risk of a serious incident increases and therefore must be formally assessed.

The risk assessment guidance and standard outlines the procedures which should be followed in order to ensure the safety of all personnel when working alone or out of hours. However, in formulating the guidance, it is recognised that although the primary responsibility is to the safety of individuals, it should not put unacceptable obstacles in the way of experienced staff who must work out of hours. The guiding theme is therefore to accommodate the needs of industrious workers without compromising safety.

2. Scope

The Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences (NDS) is a University department whose central administration offices, laboratories and associated facilities are based on level 6 of the John Radcliffe Hospital (JRH), as such it is embedded within space occupied and governed by the OUH NHS Trust.

The following standard (section 5) is concerned specifically with NDS staff and activities within the space described above. Many NDS staff work within different University departments or alternative OUH NHS Hospital sites to the JRH. Staff working at those sites should adhere with over-arching University Safety Office policy (see 6. Referenced documents below) and to any guidance, standards or risk assessments pertaining specifically to those buildings or areas.

3. Responsibilities

All Workers must ensure they are fully aware of the risks associated with Lone Working & working out of hours and understand the appropriate actions to take before they begin any procedure. Any individuals wishing to

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carry out activities within NDS space on level 6 of the JRH must read and acknowledge their understanding of this document and any associated risk assessment or work plans by adding their signatures to the sign off page.

PI's, Group Leaders & Supervisors must set a suitable framework for each INDIVIDUAL in terms of what is and what is not permissible under Lone Working and 'out of hours' conditions. Individual needs should be discussed and reported to the HR team and Departmental Safety Officer (DSO), so risk assessments and working plans can be tailored to any individual requirements.

Managers are to ensure adequate resources and support are provided to enable employees to address the problems for lone working. Managers are responsible for ensuring that those workers who report to them and who may need to work alone or in isolation are identified, and that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment is undertaken for all work activities (see section 4. Risk Assessment below).

Departments must consider carefully what first aid and other emergency provision is necessary for 'out of hours' working taking account of the nature, scale and range of activities being permitted. This is detailed in the associated risk assessment and lone working standard.

4. Risk Assessment

In order to be suitable and sufficient, risk assessments should take into account both physical factors and issues such as the emotional effects on workers in isolation. Wherever a risk assessment identifies that one person cannot carry out the work safely, alternative arrangements are to be implemented. Consideration should be given to whether the lone worker is dealing with the public and whether there is a threat of violence. Manual handling and the use of tools or specialist equipment whilst lone working must also be taken into account. Where specialist advice is required, the University Safety Office should be consulted.

Managers must consult with all employees under their direct control on the findings of any risk assessment. Managers should have the names, locations and working hours of all lone/isolated workers.

Where a risk assessment has identified a need, managers must ensure that all employees under their direct control are provided with information, instruction, training and equipment, which should be regularly reviewed and updated.

Managers must establish safe systems of work, giving consideration to providing an effective means of communication. It should be understood that making a mobile telephone available does not of itself constitute satisfactory provision for individual safety. Where required, managers should introduce further procedures/processes to ensure the safety of lone workers and thought should be given to emergency procedures appropriate in the event of fire, accidents, issues with machinery or equipment, illness etc. The availability and provision of first aid must also be considered. Procedures should be recorded in writing and circulated to all relevant staff.

Managers must review the risk assessment for lone/isolated workers:

- Whenever there is a change in the nature/method of work
- Where new equipment or material is introduced
- Where there is significant modification to plant or premises
- When new information is available on nature of risk
- Where there are changes in legislation

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- There are new categories of personnel (young, disabled, pregnant)
- Where time has elapsed (at least annually).

In summary, managers must:

- Identify lone workers under their control and create a list with their names/details.
- Carry out a risk assessment for each activity undertaken by the employee to identify the hazards and who might be harmed and how.
- Evaluate the risks and implement control measures to reduce risks to an acceptable level.
- Record findings and implement them
- Implement tracking/monitoring system for lone workers, particularly those whose are deemed to be at high risk
- Review assessments and update when necessary (at least annually).

See Risk Assessment template (Appendix A).

5. Standard

The University takes a management approach based on adequate control of the risks and expects that:

- 5.1 Lone working activities are avoided where possible, but where this is not possible, lone workers:
- 5.1.1 Are at no greater risk than those working with colleagues;
 - 5.1.2 Have formal permission in place to work alone;
 - 5.1.3 Safe systems of work have been implemented where necessary
 - 5.1.4 Are working to an approved risk assessment;
 - 5.1.5 Are provided with the required level of training and are deemed competent to work alone and use equipment and/or hazardous substances unsupervised, and this is recorded.
- 5.2 Lone working is prohibited if risks cannot be controlled to an acceptable level.
- 5.3 Protective equipment identified as required by the risk assessment is provided.
- 5.4 Emergency processes for lone workers are considered in the risk assessment and where identified as necessary, put in place, tested to check their effectiveness, and lone workers are aware of them.
- 5.5 Emergency equipment for lone workers is maintained and tested.
- 5.6 All accidents/ incidents, near misses and cases of work-related ill health are reported using the University's online Incident Reporting and Investigation System (IRIS).
- 5.7 All Lone Workers must have sufficient knowledge, experience & capability to deal with any foreseeable emergency without immediate assistance.
- 5.8 All Lone Workers should be conversant in the Risk Assessments, Local Rules, Guidelines and Emergency Procedures which are appropriate to the activity they are to undertake.

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5.9 All Lone Workers should be instructed in the University Policy Statement (S2/05) which deals with the issue of contacting the Fire Service.

5.10 All Lone Workers must know the locations of the following Emergency Equipment/Resources:

- First Aid Box
- Eye wash Station
- Emergency Spill Kit
- Fire Extinguishers
- Risk Assessments & COSHH Assessments

5.11 Emergencies.

Out of normal working hours, contact either the JRH security office: 01865 221106 or University Security Services on their 24HR EMERGENCY NUMBER which is 89999, if unsure about any situation

NOTE: Security Services can only initiate an appropriate response if they are given an up to date list of contacts. The information which needs to be provided to Security should therefore be considered as part of the risk assessment process.

In all cases, where it is safe to do so:

- Isolate & make safe any Equipment/Apparatus.
- Ensure all affected individuals are informed and are isolated from any risk.
- Contain any spillage using an appropriate 'Emergency Spill Kit'.
- Treat any affected individuals who may have been exposed to hazardous materials according to the Department's Normal Emergency Response or that given in a COSHH assessment.

6. Referenced or useful documents / links

Cross reference to University Safety Office Policy Statements:

Lone working University Safety Office: University Policy Statement S5/08:

Risk Assessment (Section 8) Risk Assessment S5/08

Supervisors' Responsibilities S1/09

Biological Health & Safety S5/09

Fieldwork activities University Policy Statement S5/07: Safety in Fieldwork

Other useful links

University of Oxford Occupational Health Service – Lone Worker Health Questionnaire

Student health and welfare <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare?wssl=1>

Harassment/bullying <https://edu.admin.ox.ac.uk/university-policy-on-harassment>

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Appendix A –

Risk Assessment Proforma for Lone Working/Out of Hours Working

Name of Individual (under assessment)		
Status: (Circle appropriate designation)	(Research) Technician / Research Assistant / Postdoctoral scientist / Postgraduate student / Undergraduate student / Clerical / Maintenance / Visitor (> 6 mths) / Visitor (< 6 mths) / Other:	
Outline the activities which are to be undertaken Out of Hours.		
Explain why this work cannot be carried out during Normal Working Hours		
Does the Individual have sufficient knowledge, experience & capability to work safely and to deal with all foreseeable emergencies without assistance?		YES / NO (If No, then appropriate supervision should be identified)
Will this work involve any of the following higher risk Activities? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biological Material requiring ‘Containment Level 2’ controls • Use of Reactive, Toxic, Corrosive or Flammable substances • Exposure to Ionising or Non-Ionising radiation • Work with Animals, specifically if there is a risk from Zoonoses • Use of Liquefied gases (e.g. Nitrogen, Helium) • Work with electrical systems • Exposure to moving machinery • Work with compressed gases • Work at Height • Activities that may affect Personal Security • Any other Substance/Activity of equivalent risk 		YES / NO (If yes, please outline below)
HAZARD IDENTIFIED	DOES THE RISK INCREASE DUE TO LONE WORKING (YES / NO)	Additional Control Measures required (e.g. Prohibition or Limitation of work, Additional Training required, Isolation or Reduction of Hazards, Periodic contact with Supervisors, Warning Devices)

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Is the Individual conversant in the Emergency Response Procedures?	YES / NO
Does the individual know the location of the nearest First Aid Box?	YES / NO
Does the individual know the location of the nearest Emergency Eyewash?	YES / NO
Does the individual know the location of the nearest Emergency Spill Kit?	YES / NO
Does the individual know the location of the nearest 'appropriate' Fire Extinguisher?	YES / NO
Does the individual require any basic First Aid Training?	YES / NO
Does the individual require any basic Fire Safety Training?	YES / NO
Detail below any additional 'First Aid Measures' required, above those outlined in the Emergency Response Procedures (e.g. Actions to take for a Phenol or Liquid Nitrogen spill).	
Detail below any specific Emergency Isolation Procedures required for hazardous equipment (e.g. Isolate electricity at switch or Isolate electricity via Emergency Stop Buttons).	
Detail below the names of any specific Emergency Contacts	
JRH security office: 01865 221106 or University Security Services on their 24HR EMERGENCY NUMBER which is 8999 - Call if unsure about any situation *	
If all specific controls (as detailed above) are deemed adequate, then the Supervisor should sign to authorise the work & the Individual should sign to accept the controls required. A copy should be retained in the group's Safety Folder and a copy given to the Individual involved.	
Name/Signature of authorising person	Date
Signature of Assessed individual	Date

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Appendix B – Useful contacts

NDS Departmental Safety Officer (DSO)

Radiation Protection Supervisor

Adam Lambert Tel: 0752 2906210

NDS Laboratory and facilities Manager

NDS Fire Safety Officer

Jessica Doondeea Tel: 0788 202 5062

NDS Biological Safety Officer

Senior Radiation Protection Supervisor

Joanna Hester Tel: 01865 612290

NDS HR Team leader

Lisa Bjork Tel: 01865 612268

NDS Departmental Administrator

Joke Snoeck Tel: 01865 617122

Medical Sciences Division Safety Officer

Graham Ross Tel: 01865 289543

OUH NHS Trust Security office

Tel: 01865 221106

University 24H Security

Tel: 8999

NDS First Aiders (JRH – L6)

Jessica Doondeea

Valerie Parke

Louise King

Joanna Lysakowska

Lucy Cerundolo

Microbiology First Aiders

Sarah Oakley

Sam McGhan

Carol Taunt

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