



# CIRSA HAZARD ALERT

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SAFER TOGETHER

## Hazard Alert - Lone Worker Safety



A recent study by the National Safety Council reported that 15% of workers nationally are lone workers, meaning their work includes one or more of the following:

- Working separately from others at a fixed location
- Working away from the main worksite
- Mobile work
- Irregular or late shift
- Work including emergency calls

Many of our members may find that their percentage of lone workers is much higher than that and may even fluctuate greatly depending on the work that is being done that day.

### **Lone Worker Hazards**

The hazards that lone workers experience are many of the same hazards that are experienced by other workers. Some of the main hazards they experience include:

- Chemical exposure
- Electrocutation
- Falls from height
- Machinery entrapment
- Slips or falls
- Being struck by heavy equipment or motor vehicles
- Sudden illness
- Hazardous Weather (snow, storms, wind, floods etc.)

## *Lone Worker Safety (cont.)*

With these hazards, lone workers experience additional hardships that can increase the likelihood and severity of these incidents. Depending on the location of a lone worker, access to communication methods and emergency services may be restricted. Lone workers may also be more susceptible to violence in the workplace, especially in public-facing duties. According to a 2022 survey of lone workers 19% reported having difficulty getting help after a workplace incident, and 44% reported feeling unsafe while working alone.

### **Lone Worker Best Practices**

Hazards to lone workers can be minimized through appropriate measures that have been properly investigated and applied to the workplace. These include:

- Identify the hazards that your lone workers are exposed to. (JSA, Hazard Analysis, etc.)
- Use the [hierarchy of controls](#) to eliminate or minimize hazards.
- Schedule high-risk tasks during normal business hours or when another worker can provide assistance.
- Teach lone workers how to do their own hazard identification.
- Establish communication procedures with lone workers.
- Have a lone worker policy that is periodically reviewed and updated as needed.
- Train lone workers and supervisors on your lone worker policy, including what is and is not allowed for lone workers.

### **Communication Methods and Monitoring**

Keeping contact with lone workers can take many forms. One method is for lone workers to periodically check in to show that they are OK, which could be done via cell phone or radio. This should include off-shift emergency calls. Having procedures for checking in and out of remote locations is another method. Some of the newer technological systems include apps that can be put on phones or other devices, including live GPS that can be tracked to show location and movement. Devices have been created that can check for motion or falls and can report when a lack of motion or a sudden fall has been detected. SOS alarms can be another method for lone workers in remote locations to report an incident and their location immediately to emergency services providers.



When beginning a new communication or monitoring method two things are very important. First, the method must be something that the worker can easily do. The more difficult the method is the less likely the lone worker will use it. Second, the use of the method must be required and the requirement enforced. This is sometimes the issue that is hardest to deal with. Just like any other safety rule or procedure, if it is not required and enforced, it is often not done. When a lone worker knows what is expected and is shown how it improves their safety it is much easier to follow.

Lone worker safety is an issue that affects many of our members and lone worker situations can involve significant risks. By assessing the work being done and applying the appropriate controls, the risk can be minimized, and a safe working environment can be provided.

### **Resources**

- [wtz-lone-down-worker-monitoring-wp.pdf \(nsc.org\)](#)
- Verdantix.(2019). Buyer's guide: Lone worker solutions. <https://www.verdantix.com/report/environment-health-safety/buyer-s-guide-lone-worker-solutions>
- National Safety Council. (2022). NiSource, lone worker monitoring. Work to Zero. <https://www.nsc.org/getmedia/7a30a878-998c-43b3-b0e8-420f30e02385/nisource-blackline.pdf>