



# Lone Worker Policies

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## BACKGROUND

It is estimated that there are as many as 53 million lone workers across North America and Europe, approximately 15% of the workforce. Companies within the wood products industry must consider policies and procedures to keep their lone workers safe while executing their work. Examples of potential lone workers in the industry include foresters, truck drivers, mill workers, consultants, and loggers. Many of these workers will be in areas that do not have cell phone coverage, nor will they be in populated areas due to the nature of the work. Working alone can increase the risk of serious injury and response times, especially when the lone worker is performing activities in remote locations.

There are many ways that companies can manage risks for lone workers, whether it be through monitoring with technology or utilizing policies and procedures to create a safe work environment for their employees. To create a comprehensive lone worker program, companies must assess the work environment, understand the risks, and mitigate these circumstances to the best of their ability.

## WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A LONE WORKER POLICY/PROGRAM

Lone worker policies should be very clear on who/when employees are considered to be working alone so that when workers are executing tasks, they understand if the lone worker policy applies to their circumstances. Lone worker policies should also include assessments that identify risks broken down by job role so that lone workers understand the risks associated with their roles and how those risks can be mitigated through actions that the company takes. For example, when lone workers leave the office on employer business, the employer should know where the employee is going, check-in times, and when the employee should return to the office.

Supervisors and employees should have a clear understanding of their responsibilities when employees are working alone, and any lone worker policy or program should include a clear outline of how to report hazards or incidents.

## ASSESSING THE RISK FOR LONE WORKERS

Lone workers are essential to the wood products industry and perform many vital roles. One way to assess the risk is to look at the jobs from different perspectives and analyze the risk of the position by evaluating people risk, environmental risk, task-based risk, and experience-based risk.

- **People Risk** involves evaluating risks when working in proximity to individuals who pose a potential risk to the worker, such as foresters cruising publicly accessible timber during hunting season, with the risk being a hunter. One way to mitigate this type of risk is to require that employees wear high-visibility clothing/ PPE to assist hunters in identifying workers.
- **Environmental risk** is when the workplace itself poses a risk to personal safety, for example when inclement weather creates dangerous situations for lone workers.
- **Task-based risk** arises from the nature of the task being dangerous, such as using a chainsaw or operating machinery on a dangerous slope.
- **Experience-based risk** is where the worker does not have the necessary expertise or experience in dealing with unusual situations or the task under the circumstances.



This Safety Alert analyzes an injury in accordance with the chain of events represented by the five dominoes above. Pioneer industry safety experts H.W. Heinrich and Alfred Lateiner developed this accident analysis system to provide a graphic sense of how injuries can be avoided. Their methodology has been accepted by safety professionals worldwide.

**Safety Meeting Report**

*Topic(s) Discussed:*

*Comments / Recommendations:*

*Date:*

*Company:*

*Names of Employees Attending:*

*Meeting Conducted by:*

*Please follow equipment manufacturers' recommendations for safe operation and maintenance procedures.*

*signature*

Risk assessments are used to identify and assess risks associated with the job role carried out by lone workers. In order to perform these assessments and control the health and safety risks, employers need to identify the hazards, decide who might be harmed and how, evaluate the risks and decide precautions, record the significant findings, communicate and train their workforce, and finally review and update policies based on the assessments.

### EXAMPLES OF A CHECK-IN PROCEDURE

Working alone is not permitted for the following activities:

- Timber falling by ground personnel
- Topping
- Tree rigging
- Operating power saws, except incidental road clearing
- Yarding and loading of logs other than shovel logging on moderate ground
- Mechanics when there is a possibility of a fall, when heavy parts require moving, or when overhead hazards may exist.

Check-in procedures are required for all working alone activities at the following intervals:

- Feller Bunching ----- 2 hours
- Shovel Logging ----- 2 hours
- Cat Work ----- End of shift
- Road Maintenance ----- End of shift
- Harvester Operation ----- End of shift
- Forwarder ----- End of shift
- Timber Cruising ----- End of shift
- Layout ----- End of shift
- Mechanic ----- End of shift

During weekday business hours, the check-in point will be the company office. Any weekend working alone activity must be prearranged with a supervisor to set up call-in procedures and an emergency responder. For hazardous activities, failure to receive the check-in call within 1 hour will activate the emergency response plan. For the end-of-shift activities, the end-of-shift notification purposes will be no later than 4:30 p.m. unless prearranged. All check-in calls will be logged.

Upon failure to receive the proper call-in, the call logger will notify the designated responder. A responder must be available by prior arrangement.

### CONCLUSION

Lone workers are prevalent within the wood products industry due to the nature of the work. Many times, these workers are in remote areas that do not have cell phone coverage, which can put these workers in danger if they encounter hazardous conditions or are hurt while performing their duties. Lone worker policies and programs help to mitigate the impacts of these hazards/incidents on personnel by providing a structured way in which the company assesses and addresses these hazards. The final step of a lone worker policy is ensuring lone workers understand both their responsibilities and the responsibilities of their supervisor so that both the employer and employee have a complete understanding of the policy to understand the precautions in place to keep the worker safe.

### SOURCES:

<https://www.safepointapp.com/blog/lone-working-in-the-forestry-sector>



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