

Lone Worker Safety Talk

A lone worker arrives early to inspect a remote work area. The task appears routine: minor maintenance, basic hand tools, a short ladder, and a tight deadline. Yet a slip, heat-related illness, electrical contact, or sudden equipment movement can turn a routine job into a life-threatening emergency within seconds. When no one else is nearby to raise the alarm or get help, the hazard becomes far more serious, and the consequences can escalate rapidly.

Primary Hazards

- Delayed emergency response: injury, collapse, or entrapment may go unnoticed and rescue may be delayed.
- Construction “Focus Four” hazards: falls, struck-by incidents, caught-in/between events, and electrocutions remain major fatal risks in construction.
- Heat stress and medical emergencies: outdoor or high-exertion work can quickly lead to heat illness, especially in hot conditions or while wearing PPE.
- Remote-location risks: poor signal, difficult access, weather exposure, and delayed rescue increase severity.
- Violence, isolation, stress, fatigue, and reduced alertness can reduce a worker’s ability to manage escalating situations safely. Long hours, poor sleep, heat, dehydration, and heavy work can impair judgment and reaction time.
- Driving and vehicle incidents: lone workers often travel between sites, work near traffic, reverse in tight areas, or drive in remote locations.
- Severe weather and environmental exposure: lightning, strong winds, rain, flooding, cold, poor visibility, and fast-changing site conditions can quickly create an emergency.

Do’s

- Assess the job before starting and confirm the scope, location, finish time, and check-in arrangements.
- Test phones, radios, alarms, batteries, and emergency contacts before entering the work area.
- Inspect for fall hazards, unstable ground, moving equipment, overhead lines, poor lighting, weather exposure, and limited access.
- Use required PPE, maintain good housekeeping, and keep access and escape routes clear.
- Confirm fitness for duty, take breaks, stay hydrated, and stop if alertness, coordination, or concentration drops.

- Check vehicles and travel routes, wear a seat belt, park safely, and pull over before using a phone or map.
- Monitor weather and site conditions and move to safe shelter if storms or lightning develop.
- Stop work immediately if communication fails, conditions change, or symptoms such as dizziness, confusion, weakness, or heat illness appear.
- If a check-in is missed, the escalation process must begin immediately, including prompt contact attempts and follow-up actions in accordance with the site's lone-worker or emergency procedure.

Don'ts

- Do not enter confined spaces alone where permits, standby personnel, or rescue arrangements are required.
- Do not perform isolated work around unstable excavations, suspended loads, energized systems, heavy plant, crush hazards, or other high-risk activities unless specifically assessed and controlled.
- Do not ignore missed check-ins, failed radios, low batteries, or signal loss.
- Do not continue working when drowsy, overheated, distracted, mentally unfocused, or otherwise unfit for duty.
- Do not ignore signs of fatigue, heat stress, illness, or physical distress.
- Do not text, dial, read messages, or handle devices while driving, and do not drive in unsafe weather or when overtired.
- Do not continue outdoor work during lightning, severe storms, or rapidly worsening weather.
- Do not assume conditions will remain safe throughout the shift simply because they were safe at the start.

Summary

Working alone increases risk because hazards may escalate before help arrives. Working alone safely depends on planning, communication, hazard recognition, fitness for duty, and knowing when to stop. Where there is a reasonable likelihood that immediate assistance may be needed, the task must not be treated as lone work.

Discussion points:

1. *What lone-worker tasks are carried out most often on site?*
2. *What check-in method is used before and during isolated work?*