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|  | ***SAFETY GUIDANCE*** |

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**LONE WORKING**

*Working alone is a risk factor and not in itself a risk.*

A risk assessment will consider the likelihood of an accident happening and the severity of probable outcome – e.g. working from a ladder has the likelihood of a fall from it and an injury outcome within a wide severity range. The risk is dependent on various factors that might lessen the risk or aggravate it – e.g. what is the work being done from the ladder and through what distance might the person fall.

This primary risk is normally not changed if the person is working alone, but it would be if the agreed risk control measures had required a second person and that person was not there – e.g. someone to 'foot' the ladder.

(Note: It is important to remember that many during their normal work become 'lone workers' for short periods of time).

A secondary risk may arise after the primary risk has resulted in an accident - and as a consequence of it. For example, the outcome of the person's fall from the ladder may be worsened if no assistance is available - perhaps a head injury with no one to call for medical attention.

There must in all risk assessments be a consideration of the 'aggravating factors' (the things that make the risk worse) of which working alone is potentially one.

What should be asked during the risk assessment is: -

"If the person doing the work is alone, and because he is alone, will:-

* the likelihood of there being an accident be increased? and/or …
* the severity of any direct harm or injury be increased?"

If either/both elements of the risk are increased a possibility is that:-

* additional or alternative control measures may reduce the risk to an acceptably low level, e.g. instruct that when alone work only from a step-ladder?

Otherwise if the total risk remains significant and unacceptable, with a high secondary risk, it may be necessary to have a second person present - or provide other risk control arrangements e.g. a radio alarm.

If a second person is considered a necessary risk reduction measure then the importance of this measure and the detail of the second person's role in implementing it must be clearly established. For example, the second person must always be at the foot of the ladder and 'footing' it in accordance with the training given.

(Note: There is an additional factor that legitimately may need consideration - the 'anxiety' factor that may require 'comfort' measures that go beyond strictly risk control measures).

**Recommendation**

During risk assessments consider whether the work will be done by persons alone and modify the risk control measures as and if appropriate. Whenever a risk assessment is reviewed consider the 'working alone' factor.

(Note: A record of a risk assessment should be made showing at least the risk control measures. Inclusion of the detail that shows the consideration of hazard and risk would depend on the level and/or complexity of the risk. Only the simplest and lowest of risks may not need a record of a risk assessment).