

**University of Oxford Medical Sciences Division**  
(Non-Clinical Departments Only)  
'Out of Hours' and Lone Working

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Cross reference to University Policy Statements:

Risk Assessment [S5/08](#) & Supervisors' Responsibilities [S1/09](#) Biological Health & Safety [S5/09](#)

### ***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 Dark Rooms. 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.

In addition, working out of hours can present an increased risk if the 'normal' emergency provisions such as first aiders are not available. Therefore an assessment of what activities are deemed appropriate to be undertaken out of hours (whether lone working or not) needs to be made.

This guidance 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 wish to work out of hours. The guiding theme is therefore to accommodate the needs of industrious workers without compromising safety.

### ***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.

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.

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.

### ***Risk Assessment***

Persons carrying out general office duties including computer work may do so on their own, as the risk is assessed as Low.

Laboratory activities however will inherently pose a greater risk to the individual if carried out alone or out of hours. Laboratories not only pose a greater number of hazards that could increase the seriousness of the incident, but due to the location and specialist nature of some areas it can also delay any emergency aid and if less experienced individuals are available to respond. Therefore any person working within non-office type areas should be formally assessed before they are authorised by their Group leader/Supervisors to work under such conditions.

### ***Do's & Don'ts***

- Laboratory (or equivalent) activities involving any form of risk greater than that in general office duties should only be undertaken with others present or at least within earshot.
- Where others are not immediately available to offer assistance, then Group Leaders & Supervisors should assess each **INDIVIDUAL** in terms of what is and what is not permissible under Lone Working conditions. Undergraduates & other similarly inexperienced individuals should only work in the building in the presence of their supervisor.
- Where the risks are significant, then a formal Risk Assessment should be drawn up detailing what activities are or are not permitted. This should be documented and verbally communicated to those individuals affected. A sample proforma is given in *Appendix A*.

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- Consideration should be given to additional safe working procedures in order to reduce any risk to as low as is reasonably practicable. Examples of appropriate safe procedures are:
  - Reducing the degree of exposure to a particular hazard, by limiting activities &/or substances used.
  - Using additional shielding or mechanical controls (e.g. Fume cupboards) to further limit exposure.
  - Identifying 24hr Emergency Contact numbers for Assistance/Advice.
  - Arranging for periodic checks to be made by supervisors.
  - The use of panic alarms or other communication devices to obtain support.
  - Providing additional Training, Instruction & Information.
  
- All Lone Workers must have sufficient knowledge, experience & capability to deal with any foreseeable emergency without immediate assistance.
  
- 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.
  
- All Lone Workers should be instructed in the University Policy Statement ([S2/05](#)) which deals with the issue of contacting the Fire Service.
  
- 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
  
- If workers do routinely carry out Lone Working, they should be encouraged to attend a First Aid 'Breath of Life' Course and 'Fire Safety Training' course.

***Emergency***

- Out of normal working hours, contact 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.

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**Appendix A – Risk Assessment Proforma for Lone Working/Out of Hours Working**

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

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<b>Is the Individual conversant in the Emergency Response Procedures?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual know the location of the nearest First Aid Box?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual know the location of the nearest Emergency Eyewash?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual know the location of the nearest Emergency Spill Kit?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual know the location of the nearest 'appropriate' Fire Extinguisher?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual require any basic First Aid Training?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Does the individual require any basic Fire Safety Training?</b>	<b>YES / NO</b>		
<b>Detail below any additional 'First Aid Measures' required, above those outlined in the Emergency Response Procedures</b> (e.g. <i>Actions to take for a Phenol or Liquid Nitrogen spill</i> ).			
<b>Detail below any specific Emergency Isolation Procedures required for hazardous equipment</b> (e.g. <i>Isolate electricity at switch or Isolate electricity via Emergency Stop Buttons</i> ).			
<b>Detail below the names of any specific Emergency Contacts.</b>			
* SECURITY 24HR EMERGENCY NUMBER is 89999 - Call this if unsure about any situation *			
<b>If all specific controls (as detailed above) are deemed adequate, then the Supervisor should sign to authorise the work &amp; 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.</b>			
<b>Name/Signature of Authorising Person:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Signature of Assessed Individual:</b>		<b>Date:</b>	