

Working Alone: Check In and Get Help

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Why this matters

Having a phone does not mean someone will know you need help. A lone-work arrangement needs an approved task, a reachable contact and a response if communication stops. The employer must make that arrangement workable.

Objective: Explain your work limits, demonstrate contact and describe what happens if a check-in is missed.

Key hazards or failure points

Unnoticed injury or illness; unreliable signal; nobody monitoring messages; unknown location; locked access; task changes that require another person.

Practical controls

- Have the supervisor assess whether the task may be done alone. Reschedule, add help or change the method when needed. A check-in plan does not replace an attendant, rescue team, fire watch or other staffing required for the task.
- Agree the work area, permitted tasks, expected finish, contact person and backup. Set check-in timing and missed-contact actions from the risk assessment; do not invent a universal interval.
- Provide communication that works at the actual location, plus the agreed backup. Plan how responders can find and reach the worker. Explain task-change, illness, threat and emergency reporting.

Verify It in the Field

Before lone work, send a planned test message or call from the work position and obtain the named contact's response. Check charge, coverage and the backup method. Do not make a test emergency call unless formally arranged.

Have the contact repeat the worker's location, next check-in and missed-contact action. Confirm the backup accepts the role and response arrangements cover the whole work period, including shift changes.

Walk through access details while safe: address, entry point and any controlled gate arrangements. Record the authorized task, check-in schedule, test result, contacts and time. Do not publish personal numbers or access codes.

Stop and reassess

Do not start or continue lone work if contact cannot be maintained, the task exceeds its agreed limits or conditions change. Move to safety and notify the supervisor. A missed check-in activates the agreed response. Re-establish suitable controls, recheck and obtain required approval before resuming.

Ask the crew

1. What part of today's work might need a second person?
2. Who is receiving our check-ins, and can we demonstrate contact here?
3. What happens if a check-in is missed or the task changes?

Before working alone: verify the contact and the response, not just the phone.

Sources: HSE lone-working guidance; CCOHS Working Alone—General; applicable task/site rules.

Free next step: [JHA/JSA planning & field-verification worksheet](#)

Expanded guidance, references, supervisor check and attendance record accompany this talk.