



Information Sheet

Foundation for Community Dance • December 2011

Health and safety for lone and remote workers

If you work alone on a regular basis, it is vital that you assess any risks with your line manager and identify any measures needed to ensure your personal safety. Thinking things through and planning for the unexpected will help you remain confident when faced with an emergency. The lists featured in this briefing can be used as an aid to help you achieve this.

Are you a lone worker?

Lone or remote workers are those who work by themselves, without close or direct supervision. This includes anyone who:

- works alone in an office, studio, workshop or other workplace;
- works at home on a regular basis or has their home as their office;
- is hosted in another organisation's office, where little or no support is offered by the host organisation;
- works outside normal hours, e.g., cleaners, staff working late, etc.;
- is required to travel alone to and from a place of work or to meetings, etc.;
- works in remote geographical areas and/or with poor communication.

A. Working in offices and other fixed establishments

There are a number potential risks associated with working alone in an office or other fixed establishment (such as a theatre, workshop or performance venue). These will vary depending on the building and its surroundings, but may include (amongst others risks):

- members of the public, contractors, etc. having access to your building (e.g. open access/unlocked doors /open space) – unfamiliar people in your building pose a risk to themselves and to you;
- poorly-lit entrances/exits;
- isolated and poorly-lit car parking facilities;
- being taken ill whilst working alone;
- lack of knowledge regarding Health and Safety in relation to the work environment (see risk assessment checklist and following procedures).

To help avoid these risks when working alone, it's a good idea to combine a risk assessment with some common sense procedures, examples of both of which are featured below. Feel free to add any checks or procedures specific to your situation.

1. Risk assessment checklist

✓ ✕

There is suitable space to work with a desk or table at a comfortable height, and a suitable chair.	✓	✕
The work area is a comfortable temperature (not too hot or cold), well lit and with sufficient ventilation	✓	✕
Toilets, fresh water and tea making facilities are available.	✓	✕
There is secure storage for confidential information at home and in transit.	✓	✕
Hazardous substances are not used.	✓	✕
Confidential waste, printer cartridges, batteries, packaging, etc. are disposed of properly.	✓	✕
There are adequate means of escape in an emergency, with no loose carpets or slippery surfaces.	✓	✕
The fire safety procedures are clear and understood.	✓	✕
The work area is not accessed by a ladder.	✓	✕
There are adequate electrical and telephone sockets so that multiple adapters are not required.	✓	✕

To the best of your knowledge, the electrical wiring is safe and checked regularly.	✓	✗
Extension leads do not cause a tripping hazard.	✓	✗
An annual electrical inspection of equipment has been conducted or arranged.	✓	✗
Electrical equipment is switched off when not in use.	✓	✗
Display screens are positioned without glare and reflection and are at a comfortable height.	✓	✗
If heavy equipment is to be moved, you know how to seek advice, i.e., from a Health and Safety officer or the	✓	✗
Health and Safety Executive, on how to do this safely.	✓	✗
A telephone or mobile is available for use in an emergency.	✓	✗
You have read relevant information on Health and Safety (e.g. RIDDOR, the HSE homeworking guide and a basic first-aid manual – see Further Resources).	✓	✗
Smoke alarms are fitted.	✓	✗
You have an accident book and are aware that any accidents that occur in the course of your work must be recorded in it.	✓	✗

Note: this list is not necessarily comprehensive – if you have any areas of potential concern specific to your situation, include them on your list and monitor them regularly. Be aware that your manager may have the right to visit your home or place of work in order to carry out Health and Safety inspections, and, if necessary, make allowances for such visits.

2. Health and Safety procedures

Voluntary Arts Briefings (see Further Resources for details) provide advice on procedures to avoid specific risks, including those associated with electrical equipment (103), fire safety (105) and the protection of children and vulnerable groups (132).

In addition, the following procedures may be relevant to lone or remote workers:

- Notify your manager if you are intending to work outside of normal office hours or in an unusual location. It is crucial for your own safety that you communicate your whereabouts and your plans. Always tell someone.
- Familiarise yourself with the layout of the building you are working in. Ensure that you have keys and, if relevant, lock all doors that allow direct access to the building or area you are working in – except fire exits. Never lock a fire exit so that it cannot be opened from the inside without a key.
- Familiarise yourself with the fire safety procedures and identify escape routes.
- Do not automatically answer the door to unexpected visitors. For example, in the case of contractors, ask for identification and, if you are at all unsure, don't let them in until you have checked it out.
- If there is a panic button at your base, familiarise yourself with its location and find out how to use it.
- Practise setting the alarm system.
- Practise the locking-up procedures.
- Do not use isolated exit routes or lifts if there are safer alternatives.
- If possible, avoid parking your car in poorly-lit areas. Move it nearer to the place you exit the building if you are able.
- Carry a torch, personal alarm and mobile phone if working alone and late.
- Notify people at home or at the office when you are working alone, and then when you are leaving work and what time you expect to be home.
- Leave contact numbers at home and the office so that the manager can be contacted if there are concerns for your safety.
- Should you feel ill whilst working alone, notify someone immediately and seek help – dial 999 if necessary.
- If you are based in a host organisation's office, check out their procedures for lone working and personal safety.
- If there is a notice board system in operation in your office – use it – leave a note to let people know if and when you can be expected back.

Hosted office arrangements

If you are using a space in another organisation's building, a hosting or partnership agreement will need to be set up between you/your organisation and the hosting organisation. This should ensure that the employee has adequate equipment, meets Health and Safety requirements, and meets security and confidentiality requirements. The checklists in this document will apply and will need to be adapted to the specific circumstances.

B. Travel

Some staff may conduct their work at a variety of sites, such as other offices, host agency/community organisation sites, meeting places/venues, or drive in rural and isolated areas, either alone or transporting others. The following points may help ensure your safety when you're out on the road.

General travel points

- Before you start, identify the locations, tasks and potential risks in carrying out the work.
- Maintain regular communication so that you and your line manager know where you are.
- Leave written details of your movements and give an idea of how long you are going to be away from base and when you should be expected back. If plans change, ring the office or your manager.
- Details of venues being visited and a contact number should always be provided.
- Think about the location of the place you are going.
- Check out the venue and prepare for the visit beforehand. Meet unfamiliar people in public areas.

Driving

Common sense can help you to stay safe when travelling alone by car.

- Plan your route in advance and have a map handy so you don't have to ask directions. Allow yourself plenty of time to travel.
- Tell people your destination and what time you expect to arrive.
- Check your fuel, oil and tyres and think through what you would do if you had to change a tyre, particularly when making a long journey.
- Check your breakdown organisation membership is up to date and keep your card handy.

- Carry a basic survival kit, particularly when travelling in rural and isolated areas – e.g. blanket, torch, hazard triangle and first-aid kit, mobile phone and some loose change or BT charge card.
- Do not keep your registration, MOT or insurance documentation in the car – it could help a thief to sell your car.
- Do not keep valuable items on view within the car (laptops and other equipment).
- Never pick up hitch-hikers.
- For the rules surrounding carrying children and vulnerable adults as passengers, see VAN Briefing 132.

If your car breaks down

- Pull off the road as far as you can and switch on your hazard warning lights.
- Try to assess whether it is safer to stay in your car or get out. Take account of how isolated you are and the time of day. If you have to start out for assistance, make a note of the surroundings, names of streets or landmarks, so you can easily relocate your car.
- Call your breakdown organisation or the police.
- If you have a mobile phone you must give your location, so note the road name or any landmarks.
- If you breakdown in a rural isolated area and you cannot get a signal on your mobile phone, then stay inside the car, lock the door and display a 'HELP' notice in the window.
- If someone stops to offer help, roll down the window just enough to ask them to contact the recovery service or the police.
- Never accept a lift from a stranger.

Parking

- Park your car in a well-lit area – especially if you intend returning to it after dark. If possible, ask someone you know to accompany you to the car.
- If this is not possible, carry a small torch and personal alarm with you.

Travelling by public transport

- Before starting a journey on a train or bus, check the timetable for departure and arrival times.
- Try to travel at times when there are likely to be more people around, and avoid travelling

late at night. If this cannot be avoided, sit near the bus driver or in a carriage with other people. Arrange to be met at your destination.

- Make sure you have the means of contacting someone to let them know if your train or bus is cancelled or late (mobile phone /phone card). If you need to take a taxi/mini cab, use a reputable firm. Seek advice and telephone numbers before leaving for your destination.

Overnight stays

- Book accommodation in advance.
- Let someone know where you will be staying and contact them on arrival.
- If you are unhappy about the location of your room, ask for a replacement as soon as possible.
- Check all security locks on doors and windows and familiarise yourself with the fire exits.
- Don't answer your room door without first putting the deadlock or chain on.
- Ask reception not to give your room number to anyone without your permission.
- Do not give your room number when you answer the room phone.
- Keep all valuables with you or in the hotel safe.
- If you hear any disturbance, stay in your room and telephone for help.
- If you would rather not be seen dining alone, order your meal in your room.

Meetings at unfamiliar venues

- Report to reception on arrival and always sign in and out of the building.
- Ask the receptionist to notify the person you are meeting.

Isolated locations/unfamiliar people

- Avoid meetings in isolated locations. Suggest a public place to meet, such as a coffee bar, etc. If this cannot be avoided then where possible do not go alone and always notify office-based staff when you arrive and leave.

- Check out the person/people you are meeting.
- Avoid walking alone at night.

Reporting an incident

- It is important to report any incident that occurs to you, whether it be aggression, violence, a transport breakdown or a personal accident, to your line manager. In this way, a full investigation can be made to assess any further potential risks and identify any additional safety procedures needed in order to prevent a similar incident happening to somebody else.

Further Resources

FCD Information Sheets

- **Just how safe are you?** (Jan 2011)

Voluntary Arts Briefings

- **132– Child Protection Part IV – children and vulnerable groups** (March 2010)
- **118 – Insurance for voluntary arts group** (June 2008)
- **109 – Child Protection Part III – an update** (December 2007)
- **108 – Health & Safety in Offices – assessing the risk** (December 2007)
- **105 – Health & Safety in Offices – fire safety** (December 2007)
- **103 – Health & Safety in Offices – electrical equipment** (December 2006)
- **83 – Child Protection Part II – putting child protection into practice** (March 2006)

Other resources

- **Health & Safety Executive** (England and Wales) – www.hse.gov.uk
- **Health & Safety Executive** (Northern Ireland) – www.hseni.gov.uk
- **Health & Safety Authority** (Republic of Ireland) – www.hsa.ie

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Foundation for Community Dance

Web: www.communitydance.org.uk
Email: info@communitydance.org.uk
Tel: +44 (0)116 253 3453
Fax: +44 (0)116 261 6801

Registered charity no. 328392

Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in
England and Wales no. 2415458
Registered office: LCB Depot, 31 Rutland Street,
Leicester LE1 1RE



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