

Lone and Out-of-Hours Working - Guidance for Heads of Schools

Checklist of Points to be considered by Heads of School etc. in relation to Lone and Out of Hours Working

General Points Requiring Attention by Heads of School etc.

- HoS, etc will need to obtain a clear picture of the nature and extent of lone and OOH working which is generally prevalent within their area of management control. This will require a suitable form of information gathering exercise, appropriate to the School etc. structure and procedures, to be cascaded down to Division, Unit etc. level.
- Activities which are to involve lone and/or OOH working should always be subject to a formal risk assessment process, and a record kept at School, Division etc. level, as appropriate, of the conclusions of the assessment, and the control measures implemented to minimise risk. This risk assessment will include general elements, e.g. routine building access arrangements for staff, students etc, as well as elements specific to particular work activities. The aim should be to move towards a culture in which permission for lone and OOH working is specifically granted for identified work activities and/or periods, and that permission is documented.
- In line with the Health and Safety Policy, any proposed out of hours work that entails a potential risk of serious personal injury, fire or other significant hazard (should control measures for some reason fail), to be undertaken by persons working alone, outwith periods of expected building occupancy (i.e. in the evenings or at weekends), must effectively be prohibited.
- Such work must be scheduled within periods of expected building occupancy, with all necessary control measures, emergency procedures etc. in place. In exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to allow such work outwith periods of expected building occupancy, if stringent additional measures can be put in place to provide an equivalent level of control to that which would apply during "normal" hours.
- Likewise, high hazard work which is to be undertaken in a lone or isolated (though not out of hours) setting, within the hours of expected building occupancy, must be subject to suitable additional controls and emergency procedures, to ensure that an equivalent margin of safety to that operating during non-lone working activities is applied.
- Even for activities which are perceived as being of low or negligible intrinsic risk, which are to take place in a lone or OOH working setting, a risk assessment should be formulated. This should take account of

foreseeable general hazards and procedures, such as identification of and communication with an individual who may have a fall down stairs, experienced sudden illness etc., rather than the intrinsic hazards associated with what would be perceived as "high risk" activities. A practical, commonsense approach to this issue will be essential.

- General access arrangements for the use of a particular building, which will include access by staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students, and visitors, will require to take account of both the high risk and low risk scenarios outlined above, as will arrangements governing persons working in other locations, outwith their normal place of work.
- Appropriate emergency procedures need to be put in place, relating to individual lone and OOH work activities (e.g. contained in a COSHH Risk Assessment) and to more global, e.g. building, emergency procedures. These must take account of salient factors such as the English language proficiency of individual personnel in the area, and their ability to respond to an emergency situation.
- Appropriate procedures also need to be put in place relating to mobility impaired staff and students who may wish or require to work in lone or OOH working situations. Estates and Buildings and the University Fire Safety Adviser are primary sources of assistance in this area, in which case by case solutions may often need to be implemented.

Additional Notes

- Moves towards a rationalisation of numbers of building entrances, increased application of electronic security, e.g. swipe card entry systems, developments in the area of personal monitoring and global positioning devices (e.g. mobile phones), as well as in fixed building monitoring systems, and the potential for an increased role for University Security in the registration and monitoring of access/egress by individuals working alone or out of hours, all afford possible avenues which will be of considerable assistance in tightening controls in this area of activity.
- Guidance and advice on lone and OOH issues are readily available from a number of sources within the University - the Health and Safety Department (Health.Safety@ed.ac.uk), Fire Safety Unit (Fire@ed.ac.uk), Estates and Buildings Department (Angus.Currie@ed.ac.uk) and Security Services (Security@ed.ac.uk) are primary sources - dependant upon the nature of the input required.
- The Health and Safety Department has formulated a model Lone and OOH risk assessment form, which will assist heads of management units to formalise and customise these procedures taking into account their own work environments and practices.

- A model generic risk assessment for low risk environments, e.g. office buildings, is also available as a guide, from the Health and Safety Department.