



STOW ON THE WOLD TOWN COUNCIL

LONE WORKING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Council is a small organisation and as such all Council staff are at some point lone workers. All staff are based at the Council's office in the Youth Centre. The Clerk is at most risk as she works full time.

Working alone is not a hazard however in some circumstances it may increase risk for a number of reasons.

It is not possible to anticipate every eventuality in a document like this and it is therefore intended as a guide for staff to help them devise safe systems of working for lone working in all foreseeable circumstances.

This can be achieved by the Clerk and councillors risk assessing the working environment and applying this guidance. The purpose of this document is to establish the way in which the Council applies health and safety controls and responsibilities for lone workers, either operating on Council premises or working alone away from the Council.

Council recognise that often it is necessary for staff to work alone and sometimes away from their normal place of work, carrying out site visits, inspections and the like. The Council as a caring employer is concerned to take steps to increase the support and protection of its staff whilst working alone and/or away from the office.

These guidelines attempt to balance the Council's need to carry on its business without causing its staff to be vulnerable to assault or other forms of aggression.

It is expected that through adoption of the following guidelines, the likelihood of incidents can be reduced to a minimum. Regardless, arrangements for support for employees are in place should they be required.

Legislation

The primary requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 imposes a 'duty of care' on organisations for all its employees. This duty is reinforced by various other acts and regulations, such as the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (MHSWR), which stresses the requirements for risk assessments.

Defining Terms

The term *lone working* within the meaning of this policy, applies to persons operating singularly, as given by the following examples:-

- Staff working alone in the Council offices both within and outside *normal working hours*.
- Staff travelling between the Council office and other sites such as parks, cemeteries or the Council's bank.

This policy does not specifically pertain to staff working from home.

PROCEDURES & GUIDANCE

Guidelines for Early and Late Working

Any member of staff working outside normal working hours, particularly on their own, is at greater risk either from intruders or from personal accident when there is no help available. The best solution is to avoid such lone working, either by home working or by planned activity involving two or more people.

If it is unavoidable, sensible precautions should be taken:

- The Chairman (or other nominated member) should be aware that such work is taking place and ensure that staff know of any special arrangements required on entering or leaving the premises and making it secure.
- When working alone, outside normal office hours, the front door should be locked. On no account should the front door be opened to any visitor (unless by prior arrangement).
- The employee should ensure that their spouse or partner, or a friend, knows that they are working early or late, at what time they expect to return and whom to contact if they do not.
- Staff should understand the availability of first aid, which will be limited in these cases, or other emergency arrangements and how to summon help if required.

Guidelines for Staff Working Alone during Office Hours

- All visitors are to be directed into the main hall and not into the office unless invited to do so by a member of staff.
- If any visitor acts in a manner that suggests they may become violent, or act in an inappropriate or confrontational manner then there is no expectation on the Council that the employee should accept the situation. Reliance is placed on the employee to assess the situation and decide:
 - Have they the skills to calm the situation down and is it likely to be effective
 - Request that the person leaves and returns at a later date.
- If any visitor is unwilling to leave – then you must leave the building via the Council entrance door and make contact with a Council member. If unable to leave the building phone the Police immediately.

Guidelines for Staff Making Site Visits

The majority of visits within the town are unlikely to lead to risk, however, at the discretion of the employee and particularly if the visit involves meeting persons not known, the following guidelines apply.

- If you expect to meet someone then leave details of who you expect to meet, when and where in the office diary.
- Carry a mobile phone which is switched on and useable.
- In case of vehicle breakdown – observe procedure in “travelling tips” below.
- If transporting cash, consider the guidance under “transporting cash” below.

Training Requirements

Employees must be given all necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to enable them to recognise the hazards and appreciate the risks involved with working alone.

Employees will be required to follow the safe working procedures and have awareness of emergency procedures. All employees are required to co operate with these efforts to ensure safe working and to report any concerns or training needs to the Chairman.

Travelling Tips - Going by car

- Keep your vehicle in good working order by regular servicing to reduce the risk of breakdowns. Join an emergency breakdown service; some of these companies now issue members with mobile phones so you do not have to leave the car to call for help.
- Keep change in the car, if you do not always carry a mobile telephone so you can call for help. Remember that you must NOT use a mobile telephone whilst moving, even with hands free equipment.
- Know where you are going and how to get there. Plan your route in advance and carry with you any maps or instructions you need to find your destination.
- If you do get lost, only ask for directions at a well lit public place; e.g. a petrol station.
- Travel by main roads and well lit streets.
- Keep the car locked when you are driving and windows up, especially in towns where you might have to stop at junctions or traffic lights.
- Never leave valuable items on the passenger seat - handbags, for example. Visible valuables encourage snatch thieves. Lock valuables in the boot when you leave your car to go to the appointment.
- Lock your car whenever you leave it, even if you are just going into the service station to pay for petrol.
- When you park during the day, ask yourself what the area or car park will be like if you return to your car after dark.
- Always park your car in the direction of escape; this avoids the need to manoeuvre if you need to leave in a hurry.
- Do not stop for people who flag you down. If you think they need help, drive on and stop at appropriate place and call for help on their behalf.
- If you feel threatened by other drivers, drive to the nearest police station, ambulance station or fire station. Failing this, go to a well-lit and populated petrol station.
- If you are prevented from moving off keep the engine running, make sure the doors are locked and make as much noise as possible. Your car is fitted with a horn - use it.

Transporting cash

- Staff with responsibility for taking cash to the bank or transporting valuables will always be vulnerable to robbery. However, you can take a number of precautions to reduce the risks involved.
- If carrying large amounts of cash then always ensure that two of you go to the bank.
- Have no routine to take cash to the bank – vary your times and even your route.
- Never advertise the fact you are carrying cash. Instead of using bank cash bags, disguise the fact that you are transporting cash by carrying it in a strong shopping bag or similar.
- Bank only during daylight hours if possible.
- Bank any money regularly to keep cash to a minimum.
- Most importantly NEVER try to resist or “take on” a robber. Hand over the cash calmly if he demands it. If a robber simply runs up and grabs the bag, don't try to hang onto it.