



Lone and 'Out of Hours' Working

Module 3



Health & Safety
Essentials

Registered charity number 207890

Hierarchy of control measures

The established hierarchy of controls should be applied to lone working just as with managing risks from other sources.

The hierarchy typified by 'E-S-R-E-A-P' (see *Health & Safety Essentials – Risk Assessment* for additional information on similar hierarchy) is acceptable:

Eliminate	Remove the risk/consider alternative option
Substitute	Substitute for a less hazardous substance/option
Reduce Exposure to the Risk	Consider use of less time, fewer people, smaller quantity/process and enclosed apparatus/equipment
Engineering Control	For example, local exhaust ventilation/fume hood
Administrative Controls	Safe Systems of Work such as procedural control and/or laboratory scripts
Personal Protective Equipment	For example, respiratory protection

Descending the list, the upper options of the hierarchy are the more robust controls whereas the lower options of the hierarchy require effective maintenance of management, supervision and cooperation, all of which are more susceptible to human failure.

Institutions need to ensure that personnel who are lone workers and/or undertake 'out of hours' working are properly trained and instructed for the tasks undertaken during such times. For example, the researcher is trained in the use of the laboratory equipment and is aware of the risks involved. Furthermore, it is important the researchers know what to do in an emergency or if something goes wrong.

'Safe Systems of Work'

It is recommended that institutions have a specific policy on 'lone working' and 'out of hours' working in laboratories and related facilities. In devising such a policy, institutions can create a framework (i.e. a safe system of working) for such work to provide additional protection to such workers. Work activities that identify potential lone working and out of hours working must be sufficiently risk assessed. Such a risk assessment should consider in particular, the actual risks involved, the ability ('competence') of the personnel, the work environment in such conditions, and the management of emergencies.

Additional precautions can include specific times defining what work is permitted in laboratories, when authority is required (e.g. working after 23:00). It must be clearly understood that laboratory work involving hazardous substances, where a risk of exposure has been identified, that the work is conducted in normal hours and without the need for lone working. The type of work permitted in laboratories during 'out of hours' and where the operative is a 'lone worker' will be determined by the risk assessment and the institution's own health & safety policy.

It is good practice for institutions/Chemistry departments to set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone and when 'out of hours'. It is essential that less experienced workers, such as research students, are aware of increased risk to their health & safety during 'out of hours' and when they become a lone worker. It is advisable for Chemistry departments to guide workers; work requiring a second person (i.e. in line of sight or earshot of another) should be stipulated and clear examples of what work is and is not permitted during 'out of hours' and when personnel become 'lone workers'.

Emergencies

Emergency planning (clearly laid out in the Institution's Health & Safety Policy) must include the foreseeable scenarios of a person becoming ill whilst lone working and during 'out of hours'; suffering from an accident or some other type of emergency. For example, arrangements should be put in place in case of a fire or in case a worker is injured (such as necessary provisions for first aid).

Laboratories must be fitted with a telephone to raise the alarm. It is advisable that personnel carry mobile telephones so that they can raise the alarm should they be remote from the laboratory telephone.

