

# **Controlling Lone Worker Risk through Effective Technology Solutions**



**UK Leaders in Lone Worker Care & Protection**

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**Following the recent drastic announcements by the Sentencing Guidelines Council that advises Courts in the award of punishments as the consequences for firms contravening health and safety legislation, Tom Morton, CEO of Argyll, the UK's largest lone worker service provider, advises employers how they can safely mitigate corporate risks using existing technology.**

In addition to robust management processes, the HSE recommends that managing the safety of a workforce isolated from their colleagues requires efficient communications to be maintained between the employee and their employer.

Pragmatic employers already acknowledge that it is almost impossible to continuously supervise lone workers manually and that software based lone worker solutions are widely available and can operate 24 hours. These solutions are capable of being accessed via standard mobile phones, smart-phones and specialized lone worker devices and so it is possible to meet the minimum requirement of the HSE guidance and communicate regularly with your lone workers. These software systems enable employers to manage their corporate

exposure to health and safety risks and release valuable management time to focus on core business activities rather than day-day health & safety administration.

New 'specialized' automatic warning devices, which operate if specific signals are not received from the lone worker (eg man-down devices) are widely available but employers should guard against the temptation for widespread deployment since not all devices currently available will offer compliance with the minimum features recommended within the published lone worker industry standard BS8484. Fundamentally these type of devices are not always required by every lone worker within the organization and any decision to deploy highly specialized equipment could be costly. In real terms this should only be considered once the organisation's risk assessment identifies a specific risk or system improvement requirement and where mitigation of the risk cannot be achieved using other equipment or assets.

Lone worker staff typically operate over a wide geographic area and away from the main office premises, consequently the use of location monitoring technology, such as GSM location services (using mobile network masts) or GPS (highly accurate Global Positioning Satellite embedded within specialized devices and within many mobile phone equipments eg Blackberry) can be combined with comprehensive Internet mapping tools to offer major safety improvements.

The monitoring of GSM and GPS devices and use of associated mapping tools provide both parties with valuable reassurance that a lone worker's position is capable of being established during incident management scenarios since incident responders need to provide assistance quickly. This is especially relevant where police, fire or ambulance services are required to be mobilized since location of the incident will be a fundamental requirement placed by these organizations on any lone worker service. Employers can also enjoy tangible business benefits within customer services and improved efficiency or productivity gained from understanding the movements of staff resource.

Technical solutions are both affordable and widely adopted. However the Internet is awash with devices, software, location providers and response service providers. All of these companies appear to be offering 'similar' products. Whoever is charged with procurement of IT and with overseeing health and safety within the organization should therefore seek professional advice to ensure compliance with the

tightening legislation and also in terms of resilience of service and personal data protection before making any purchase.

The British Security Industry Association has recently published a guide to BS8484, the lone worker devices and services standard. BS8484 is already adopted by quality lone worker solution providers and ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) has recently amended the alarms response policy to only provide police response to those bona-fide service providers capable of demonstrating compliance with BS8484.

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