



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

# **Health and Safety Guidance**

**GUIDANCE/31/OHLW/12**

## **Guidance on Out of Hours Activities and Lone Working**

## Introduction

The activities of the University lend themselves to flexible working days. Whilst much of the activity takes place during 'office hours', a considerable amount of activity takes place outside of these hours. Indeed certain locations may be busier 'out of hours' than during 'normal working hours'. In addition staff and students can find themselves working alone, both on and away from campus.

Section 1 of this guidance covers *Out of Hours Activities* and Section 2 *Lone Working* although there is some inevitable cross over.

## Other related information and documentation

**Working off campus** including Community Visits, Fieldwork, Travelling Abroad and student placements

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/worksafe/topics/offcampus.aspx>

### **Unattended Apparatus and Equipment Guidance GUIDANCE/32/UAE/12**

This guidance applies primarily to experimental equipment and apparatus. However, it is applicable to proprietary equipment.

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/hsu/hsuguidance/32uae.pdf>

### **Supervisor's Health and Safety Responsibilities guidance GUIDANCE/30/SHSR/12**

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/hsu/hsuguidance/Supervisors-Health-and-Safety-Responsibilities.pdf>

### **Guidance for Academic Supervisors and Others who may be Supervising Academic Work GUIDANCE/16/SAW/00**

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/documents/public/hsu/hsuguidance/16SAW.pdf>

## Section 1:

### Out of Hours Activities

The University does not define 'out of hours' but, as a guide, 'out of hours' should be considered as:

- Weekdays between 6pm and 8am
- Weekends
- Closed days and Bank Holidays

Examples of the varied nature of out of hours work include:

- Academic staff and students working in the evenings, at night or weekends to carry out experiments, observe research etc.
- Administrative staff working late.
- Staff associated with events, concerts, dinners, balls, firework displays etc.
- Those working and studying in libraries, computer clusters etc with extended opening hours.
- Estates staff carrying out maintenance (planned and unplanned).
- Hospitality and Accommodation Services staff providing security, catering and the management of residential accommodation etc.

Working outside of the accepted normal working day will not usually pose an increased health and safety risk. However there may be an additional or increased risk of accidents or incidents occurring due to the limitations of systems or procedures to cope with an emergency, particularly if working alone, primarily due to a lack of control or supervision. There may also be personal security issues if working in isolated areas, again particularly if working alone after dark or if away from campus.

These, and if appropriate, more specific health and safety risks, need to be considered before members of staff and/or student work out of hours.

### Risk assessment

The following should be considered when assessing the risks from out of hours working:

- Does the work need to be done out of hours? Can the activity be carried out during the normal working day?
- Does the work environment present a specific risk? For example will the work take place in a chemical or biological laboratory or where other experiments are taking place which could pose a risk?
- Will the work take place in an area, either on or away from campus, which may pose a risk to personal safety?
- Will the work take place in an isolated environment and without any direct supervision?
- Can the activity safely be undertaken by one person, or is supervision and/or instruction and assistance required? *See Section 2 Lone Working.*
- Does the activity require specific training, skills and experience?
- Does the person undertaking the activity require a certain level of maturity and experience?
- Can all the substances and equipment used in the work be safely handled by someone, possibly working by themselves?

- Does the work involve using complicated or potentially dangerous machinery or safety critical equipment?
- If something goes wrong, what mitigation procedures are there – what is the worst that could happen?
- Are specific emergency procedures required in case the person is taken ill or an accident occurs during the activity? For example:
  - How will anyone know they are there?
  - How will anyone know if something is wrong?
  - How will anyone know who to contact if something does happen e.g. emergency procedure?
  - How will help be summoned?

### **Control Measures**

The following are suggestions for the types of controls which can be put in place to manage the risks associated with out of hours working:

- Local procedures for out of hours working should be produced and communicated with all staff and students.
- Authorisation for working out of hours to be given by the Head of School/Department or similar senior member of staff.
- Specify what activities can be undertaken out of hours.
- Specify the competencies needed to work out of hours and establish whether supervision is required.
- Local arrangements established to inform University Security of out of hours working.
- Specify if work can be done alone.
- Signing in books may be appropriate as part of local arrangements to record who is working, when and where they are working, a brief description of the work they are undertaking and details of an emergency contact. However these are not required to assist with evacuation in the event of a fire or other emergency.

## Section 2: Lone Working

It is inevitable that at certain times staff, students and visitors will find themselves working alone. This may be because of:

- the time of day, e.g. early in the morning, at lunch time or late at night;
- the time of the year, e.g. during holiday periods;
- the location of the work, e.g. an individual office, a remote building or location or off campus;
- the nature of the work, e.g. maintenance, horticulture or security.

Apart from some specific work activities there are no regulations prohibiting lone working. Lone working is required to be considered in the overall risk assessment for a particular activity. If a significant risk is identified then suitable control measures should be put in place to reduce the risks to an acceptable level. If the risk is significantly high the control measure may be to prohibit lone working.

### Definition of Lone Working

Lone working is an activity where a person has neither visual nor audible communication with someone who can summon up assistance in the case of an accident, emergency or illness.

### Activities where Lone Working is prohibited by law and/or University policy include:

- working on live electrical equipment;
- diving;
- working with pyrophoric and cryogenic substances;
- entry to a confined space.

### Categories of Lone Working

Lone working can be divided up into two categories:

- low risk lone working;
- higher risk lone working.

#### 'Low risk' Lone Working

Examples of low risk lone working include:

- administrative tasks;
- office, library, lecture theatre and study room based academic work;
- travelling around the campus;
- basic cleaning tasks;
- some basic maintenance work;
- some manual horticultural work;
- some basic assembly work in workshops;
- some basic laboratory work.

#### 'Higher risk' Lone Working

Examples of 'higher risk' lone working include:

- laboratory work;
- using machinery and electrical equipment;
- using hazardous substances;
- carrying out hazardous procedures;
- travelling and working off campus in this country and abroad.

#### 'Low risk' and 'higher risk' lone working:

Lone workers should not be exposed to significantly higher risks than those who work together. When carrying out a risk assessment the following points should be considered, assessed and control measures put in place:

- **Are there safe means of egress?**  
e.g. if working out of hours will suitable exits be available.
- **Is there a risk to personal security?**

- **Is the person medically fit to work alone?**  
Anyone can be taken ill whether alone at work or elsewhere. The consequences have to be considered, e.g. how long will it be before they are found if they collapse, what risks are there if they cannot control a piece of equipment etc.
- **How competent is the lone worker?**  
The risk associated with an experienced member of staff working alone may be considered acceptable but the risk associated with a student doing the same work may be unacceptable.
- **What extra training will lone workers need?**  
e.g. in unusual or emergency situations when they have to make decisions on their own.
- **What are the supervision arrangements?**  
Although there will be no direct supervision, arrangements will have to be made to know what the person is doing and when.

#### **Additional points to consider for 'higher risk' lone working**

- **Does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?**  
e.g. confined spaces, laboratories, remote areas, some urban areas etc.
- **Does the work activity present a special risk to the lone worker?**  
e.g. working with machinery, hazardous substances, visiting people in their own homes etc.
- **Can one person handle equipment safely?**  
e.g. items may be heavy, awkward.
- **Can one person use or operate the equipment safely?**  
e.g. ladders may need footing, plant may need more than one person to operate it.

#### **Specific activities where two or more people should be present**

(This is not a definitive list)

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Use of machinery	Saws, drills, lathes, slicers
Use of hazardous substances	Substances that can cause significant injury, fire etc
Where a permit to work is required	Confined spaces, high voltage electrical systems
Work where there is a high risk to personal security	Transporting large sums of money, working in certain urban or remote areas

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