

The Watercress Way
Registered Charity Number 1167675

Lone Worker Policy



1. Policy statement

When a volunteer or staff member is required to work alone, both the individual volunteer and the manager or commissioner of the task have a duty to assess and reduce the risks which lone working presents.

2. Purpose

This policy is designed to alert volunteers to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities that each person has in this situation and to describe and carry out procedures which will minimise such risks.

3. Definitions

A lone worker is a volunteer or employee who performs an activity that is carried out in isolation from others without close or direct supervision. Such staff may be exposed to risk: this must be taken into account, and a separate risk assessment drawn up if necessary.

Initially, this policy will apply only to volunteers (as The Watercress way charity, at time of writing, does not have staff) but in future, this may include paid staff too. Trustees are volunteers so this applies to Trustees.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers who may be working alone, at any time, in any of these situations:

- to manage vegetation
- on construction projects
- leading informal walks
- preparation for and holding events
- meeting persons as yet unknown to the group

5. Context

Lone workers face the same risks as anyone else, as well as those directly related to their work.

Within The Watercress Way charity's overall policy relating to safer working practices, support for those working on their own is an essential part and the same principles apply, namely:

- a commitment to supporting all volunteers (including those in supervisory role) to establish and maintain safe working practices
- reducing and recognising risk
- a commitment to the provision of *appropriate* support, with a clear understanding of the responsibilities of both the supervisor and the individual
- the priority placed on the safety of the individual over property
- a commitment to provide appropriate training for volunteers
- equipment such as mobile phones, appropriate clothing etc can be provided if necessary.

6. Mandatory Procedures

The Lone worker must not assume that having a mobile phone and a back-up plan is sufficient safeguard in itself. The first priority is to plan for the reduction of risk.

- A Lone worker should take all reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety as they would in other circumstances.
- Before working alone, an assessment of the risks involved should be made in conjunction with the project Supervisor or another equally qualified peer.
- Volunteers must inform a Trustee or other identified person when they will be working alone. The volunteer should give details of their location, the time they expect to start and finish and check in at the end of that time to say the task was completed safely.
- The Charity will ensure there is a robust signing in/out mechanism where volunteers are 'lone working'.
- The Charity has in place a procedure if the volunteer does not 'check out' as expected.
- Arrangements for contacts and resources must be tailored to risk, and to meet the needs and capabilities of the team, and of the tasks involved (eg: brush cutting is high risk, litter picking may be lower risk)

7. Assessment of risk

In drawing up and recording an assessment of risk, the following will be considered:

- Environment: location, weather, security, access, time of day
- Context: nature of the task, any special circumstances.
- Individuals concerned: risk history, any previous incidents, levels of experience in the task, familiarity with environment
- Any special circumstances

There may be occasions when the same activity is repeated.

The Risk assessment will be reviewed regularly for relevance, adapting as new risks are identified and mitigated.

8. Reporting

Should an incident occur, the reporting and debriefing by the Lone Worker to the Trustees should follow.

9. Known Risks and Procedures

- Operation of power driven tools (eg: brush cutter)
- Dealing with animals who come onto the operation site (eg: pets and wild animals)
- Working with hazardous materials or in a hazardous site (eg: strong slopes, wet, muddy)
- Working with heavy or difficult materials (eg: unwieldy branches)

10. Monitoring and review

The policy will be reviewed as part of the regular cycle of reviews unless changing circumstances require an earlier review.(eg: after any unexpected incident)

11. All volunteers will be made aware of two recognised sources of support and advice:

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust is a leading charity on personal safety <http://suzylamplugh.org>
Health and Safety Exec provides a clear checklist, consideration of violence against the individual, and a set of case studies in the management of risks for the lone worker. <http://hse.gov.uk/violence>

Lone Worker policy prepared by Jackie Porter, Trustee, from the Model Policy devised by 'PeopleSafe' "Lone Working: Policy, Procedures, Practice and Guidance"

The Watercress Way (charity no. 1167675)
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