

Lone working

Lone working in retail happens when workers are required to work by themselves, for example, opening or closing the store, restocking after hours, or covering shifts in small shops. Working alone increases risk because there is no one immediately available to help if something goes wrong.

Managing the risk

- Avoid lone working where possible by designing rosters carefully.
- If unavoidable, provide clear procedures for safe opening and closing.
- Ensure regular check-ins with managers or co-workers.
- Provide duress alarms or mobile phones for emergency contact.
- Train workers to handle aggression and to withdraw from unsafe situations.

Good practice

- Have a written lone working policy in place.
- Conduct risk assessments before assigning lone duties.
- Make lone working a shared responsibility, not the worker's burden.

Employee checklist

- Lone working policy in place.
- Check-in system working.
- Emergency contact device available.
- Workers trained in lone working risks.
- Risk assessment completed for lone duties.

Do

- Provide clear lone working procedures.
- Check in regularly with lone workers.
- Ensure workers have the ability to contact emergency workers.
- Train workers in handling aggression.
- Plan rosters to minimise lone shifts.

Don't

- Leave workers unsupported during lone working.
- Ignore risks associated with violence or robbery.
- Assign lone working without risk assessment.
- Expect workers to continue in unsafe situations.
- Assume lone working is safe without systems.