

PLAY IT SAFE

Rob Gilbert outlines the hidden risks of lone worker safety

Every lone worker can be a moment away from a threat. That's, unfortunately, the harsh reality of modern field services. Yet, many organisations may not fully realise the extent of their responsibility. When a worker is alone, danger isn't distant. It's slipping on an icy pavement. It's falling from a height when no one is around. It's a dark car park in winter.

But what's more worrying is that these aren't made-up scenarios. It's the real, everyday reality for lone workers in the UK and worldwide.

Reports of assaults, threats, and accidents involving lone workers have surged year-on-year – with the HSE reporting 642,000 attacks in 23/24 – and the safety net is often stretched far too thin. The consequences can be severe, impacting both worker well-being and business continuity.

One in four of the UK's working population is classed as a lone worker, but who makes up these workers? Many picture an emergency response worker or night security guard. That would be right, but lone workers are also carers entering unknown living conditions, utility engineers responding to a flood, power outage or gas leak, retail staff locking up alone, and delivery drivers navigating unfamiliar neighbourhoods late at night. And it's not just about the physical threats. The mental toll of isolation and hyper vigilance can be staggering. As many of us know, anxiety doesn't clock off at the end of a shift.

Some organisations are making strides in enhancing lone worker safety, but more can be done. While safety devices and apps certainly help meet regulations, more is still needed. Making risk awareness a bigger part of daily work isn't just a box to tick – it's about real accountability and clear health and safety guidelines for all.

Lone workers face unique challenges daily and without the right protections and support they can feel isolated, a view supported by The British Safety Council which recently highlighted the importance of proper safeguards for field workers, emphasising that organisations must take active steps to protect and support them.

Technology can truly transform how lone workers carry out their daily duties. It goes beyond intelligent GPS trackers or emergency alarms. It's more about innovative systems that help keep them safe from harm before it happens. Modern lone worker solutions already exist that can...

Detect emergencies in real-time: body-worn devices or innovative applications can instantly send an alert or location information, enabling rapid 24/7 responses when an emergency occurs.

Streamline Safety Protocol: freeing teams from manual check-ins and allowing them to focus on their core duties while feeling reassured they are always



protected, knowing they have enhanced safety features protecting them.

Enhance Operational Compliance: this can be amplified through automated direct-to-device (D2D) wellness check-ins during the workday. This ensures continuous service and protects your organisation from potential risks and penalties.

Integrate Seamlessly into Workflows: easy-to-use web-based management platforms can support an unlimited number of tailored staff profiles across multiple devices. This, combined with intelligent scheduling tools, can ensure checks and protocols are completed without disrupting workforce productivity.

These tools aren't just reactive; they're proactive. They empower field workers to feel supported, knowing assistance is available around the clock. More importantly, they enable organisations to fulfil their duty of care in a meaningful way.

The future of lone worker safety lies in the combination of exceptional technology, education and leadership. It's about leveraging innovation to bridge the gap between potential and protection.

A truly safe workplace for lone workers means a culture where workers feel valued and heard; smart systems that predict risk rather than just responding to incidents; and organisations prioritising safety not as a tick-box exercise, but as a core principle.

The working environment will always carry risks, but with the right tools and mindset, organisations can ensure workers don't have to face them alone ●

Body-worn devices can instantly send an alert or location information should an emergency occur

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