

# HEALTH & SAFETY NOTICE



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## WORKING ALONE SAFELY

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# **WORKING ALONE SAFELY**

## **INTRODUCTION**

- 1 This Health and Safety Notice should be read and understood by all staff of Vacman Cleaning Ltd.

## **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 2 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (Sections 2 & 3) and the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992 (Regulation 3). Vacman Cleaning, as employers, are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their staff and the health and safety of those affected by the work.
  - 2.1 There is no general prohibition on people working alone, but sometimes the law stipulates that at least two people must be involved in the work and specifies the safe systems of work to be followed (e.g. live electrical working, trainees operating specified machines). In some cases exemptions are available, in others the law stipulates the standard of supervision to be provided (e.g. for young people undergoing training), and limits the extent to which people may work on their own.
  - 2.2 Where there is no specific legal prohibition on working alone, the general duties of the Health and Safety at Work Act still apply. This requires the identification of the hazard, assessing the risks involved (HSN-36), and devising and implementing safe working arrangements to ensure that the risks are either eliminated or adequately controlled. When it is not possible to devise arrangements for the work to be done safely by one person, alternative arrangements providing help or back up have to be devised.

## **MANAGERS RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3 These responsibilities cannot be transferred to staff that work alone or without close supervision. Managers must be aware of any specific legal requirements applying to work in their area and they must arrange that the necessary equipment, information, instruction, training and supervision is provided to ensure that those requirements are met.
  - 3.1 Assessments of the risks of working alone carried out under Risk Assessment HSN-36 will confirm whether one unaccompanied person can do the work safely.

## **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 4 Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (Section 7), staff have responsibilities to take reasonable care of themselves and others affected by their work and to co-operate with their line managers and employers in the discharge of their legal obligations.
- 4.1 It will be the staff's responsibility to inform their line manager, or supervisor of the fact that they are intending to work alone.

## **SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK**

- 5 Working alone can happen at any time but the risks inherent in working alone after a building has officially closed will be greatly increased and this must be taken into consideration when undertaking the risk assessment. (Appendix 2 for guidelines)
- 6 Establishing safe working arrangements for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff. Managers must assess the risks of working alone. Risk Assessment (HSN-36), will confirm whether the lone worker can actually do the work safely.
- 6.1 This will include the identification of hazards from:
- 6.1.1 machinery used,
  - 6.1.2 items handled,
  - 6.1.3 substances used,
  - 6.1.4 environment & Atmosphere encountered
  - 6.1.5 being outside or inside normal working hours
  - 6.1.6 violence from others.
- 6.2 Particular consideration must be given to the following:
- 6.2.1 does the workplace present a special risk to the lone worker?
  - 6.2.2 is there safe access and egress?
  - 6.2.3 can one person safely handles any temporary access equipment that is necessary such as portable ladders or trestles?
  - 6.2.4 can all the plant, equipment, substances and materials involved in the work be handled by one person safely?
  - 6.2.5 will money be handled and/or could there be a risk of violence?
  - 6.2.6 is the person medically fit and suitable to work alone? Check that lone workers have no medical conditions that make them unsuitable for working alone. Seek medical advice if necessary,
  - 6.2.7 consider both routine work and foreseeable emergencies that may impose additional physical and mental burdens on the individual,
  - 6.2.8 what training is required to ensure proficiency in safety matters
  - 6.2.9 problems of communication

- 6.2.10 emergency procedures (HSN-09),
- 6.2.11 access to a trained first aider
- 6.2.12 knowledge of fire procedures and use of fire extinguishers.

## **PERMIT TO WORK**

- 7 In certain circumstances, particularly when the risks in section 6 are considered too high or where specific legal requirements exist, written permission to carry out the work or procedure may be required in the form of a permit to work.
- 7.1 The permit to work system at Vacman is managed by the Head office and the procedures are explained in the Permit to Work Procedure Code of Practice.

## **WORKING ALONE OFF-SITE**

- 8 One aspect of Health and Safety that is often overlooked is that of personal safety. Many staff work in an environment that could be potentially unsafe. This is especially true of staff who work alone either on or off-site. Line managers must use the guidelines in Appendix 2 while undertaking a risk assessment to ascertain the level of risk that staff may be exposed to and then take appropriate action. This may include:
- 8.1 implementing a contact system for staff working alone,
  - 8.2 changing the system so that personnel do not have to work alone in the evenings or early in the morning,
  - 9.3 specific training for lone working.
- 10 Every incidence of lone working will be unique to the individual. Although every incidence of lone working requires assessing, generic risk assessments can be used as a basis. The assessments should be reviewed and modified as required.
- 11 Staffs and students have a duty not to put themselves or others at risk by their actions or omissions.

## **FIRST-AID**

- 12 The Health & Safety (First-Aid) Regulations 1981 place a general responsibility on employers to provide appropriate first-aid facilities. If a lone worker sustains a minor injury, they may be able to use a first aid box or telephone for assistance. However, a more serious injury may mean that the worker cannot help him or herself or use the telephone.
- 12.1 Where more serious injuries are foreseeable then the absence of a colleague to administer or at least organise help could be construed as insufficient first-aid

cover. This hazard should be highlighted and controlled in the risk assessment.

## **TRAINING**

- 13 Training is particularly important where there is limited supervision to control, guide and help the individual in situations of uncertainty. It may be critical to avoid panic reactions in unusual situations. Lone workers need to understand fully the risks involved in the work, the necessary precautions and be sufficiently experienced. Managers and supervisors should establish clear procedures to set the limits to what can and cannot be done while working alone.
- 14 Managers and Supervisors should ensure that written details are kept of specialist training provided and qualifications awarded to staffs engaged in lone working. These may range from simple records of verbal or practical instruction on, for e.g. emergency procedures to full training schedules for safe operation of machinery.

## **ADEQUATE SUPERVISION**

- 15 How will the person be supervised? Although lone workers cannot be subject to constant supervision, it is still the duty of a Supervisors to provide appropriate control of the work. The extent of supervision required depends on the risks involved and the proficiency and experience of the worker to identify and handle safety issues. Staff new to the job, undergoing training, doing a job which presents special risks, or dealing with new situations may need to be accompanied at first. The extent of supervision required is a decision for the line Manager. It should not be left to individuals to decide what level of advice, supervision or assistance they require.

## **DEFINED WORKING LIMITS**

- 16 Managers and supervisors should establish clear procedures to set limits of what can and what cannot be done while working alone. Clearly this is impossible to define in general terms, but they should specify how to behave in circumstances which are new, unusual or beyond the scope of the individual's current state of training e.g. decide to stop work and seek the advice of a supervisor.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

- 17 What happens if a person becomes ill, has an accident or there is an emergency? Lone workers should be capable of responding correctly in emergency situations. Emergency procedures should be established and lone workers trained to implement

them. Information about emergency procedures should be given to lone contract workers who visit Vacman premises. Lone workers should have access to adequate first-aid facilities and mobile workers (e.g. drivers) should carry a first-aid kit suitable for treating minor injuries. Following the risk assessment suitable systems should be devised to monitor the condition of lone workers. In addition it is desirable to consider:

- 17.1 procedures where regular contact between the lone worker and supervision is maintained using either a telephone or radio; automatic warning devices which operate if specific signals are not received periodically from the lone worker e.g. systems for security staff.
- 17.2 other devices to raise the alarm in the event of an emergency; these devices might be operated manually or activated automatically by the absence of activity.
- 17.3 procedures where supervisors periodically visit and visually monitor people working alone.

Approved by:



.....  
Managing Director

Date:...../...../.....

## Vacman - HSN-31: APPENDIX 2

### Line Manager's Guidelines for assessing the risks of Lone Working

#### CRITERIA

1 **Do members of your staff work alone in the premises?**

Someone working alone or with no other member of staff present could be considered to be at risk.

2 **Do members of your staff work early in the morning or late at night?**

If staff work on their own in uninhabited parts of buildings outside normal working hours, they can be considered to be at risk.

3 **Do members of your staff work off-site?**

Staff may have to work on their own outside the premises. It may be that they have to visit someone off site, in the street or elsewhere.

**If the staffs who are under your control fit into any of the above criteria you MUST consider the following:**

#### SAFEGUARDS

1 **Does anyone know where the member of staff is?**

If staff are working off-site they should lodge their itinerary with a nominated person in the company to ensure that someone else is aware of it. It is also essential that estimated times of returning to work/home are given.

2 **Is there a contact system?**

If staff are leaving site to visit someone, arrangements **must** be made to ensure that the member of staff has arrived at their eventual destination safely. This is especially important if they are making the visit on their way home.

3 **Have other working arrangements been considered?**

Can the working arrangements be changed to eliminate lone working.

## **STRATEGIES TO AVOID DANGER (TRAINING)**

### **1 Learn to trust senses and feelings**

Everyone has an in-built warning system called the **flight** or **fight** syndrome. The human body tells you when things are going wrong. Training can make people aware of these warnings and how to use them to the individuals advantage.

### **2 Use of Protective Behaviour**

Simple tactics to for staff to use if they believe they are being followed.

- a) Check if you are being followed by crossing the street or deviating from the route.
- b) Never walk through dark, quiet areas.
- c) If you are worried, contact the police. It is better to be safe than sorry.
- d) Change your working habits as often as possible. In this way it will be more difficult for you to be targeted over a period of time.

### **3 Training**

Specialist training in this field can be invaluable. **It could save your life.**