

## Safeguarding Lone Workers with Technology

### BRIEF OVERVIEW



Communication amongst teams is an essential part of conducting an efficient, effective and safe business. But when it comes to selecting a communications device to appropriately safeguard the lone workforce, with an increasing range of options, choosing the right solution that addresses the needs of employees and the business as a whole, can be challenging. As each Lone Worker product can have different characteristics which may not be of benefit to the user or the business.

Businesses need a way to combine different functions, such as communication and lone worker protection into one streamlined device. A smartphone is often the first choice for less experienced procurement

managers. We're all familiar with them in our personal lives, but this is not necessarily the best option for every job role?

There are a number of considerations to take into account. For example, do staff need to be contactable all of the time? What if employees work in remote parts of a plant alone, in the evenings or at weekends? For those workers to feel safe and the employer to fulfil their duty of care, there must be a way for them to raise an alarm to get the immediate support they require in the event of an emergency.

Providing lone workers with a communication device to contact staff in an emergency would mitigate some of the risk. But bear in mind that in 2019-2020 there were 20 fatal incidents and 66,000 non-fatal injuries within the UK manufacturing sector alone.



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Having a communication device would certainly be better than nothing at all but if a worker falls from height, gets struck by a moving object or comes into contact with machinery - does a communication device offer enough protection? If workers can't call a number or communicate easily and inform colleagues where they are, then this form of protection will leave them and the business horribly exposed.



However, providing staff with a device that is easy to raise an alert such as an emergency button and can trigger alerts automatically if they're rendered unconscious, can ensure that staff are better protected against the ongoing incidents that occur within the sector every year.

Better still by combining different functions into one streamlined device means that workers don't need to carry around multiple different handsets, which can be a common occurrence when businesses address "Lone Worker" challenges in isolation. While this isn't necessarily an issue, it can mean unnecessary expense as hardware is duplicated. Most importantly, organisations

should work with experts to ensure they have the right device for their requirements and infrastructure, for example buying lone worker devices to operate in areas with limited mobile connection will be avoided. Additionally, panic buttons, tilt and no-motion sensors and other comprehensive lone worker protection functions can all be integrated into one device. Based on smartphone or Private Mobile Radio Technology, devices can be compact and robust, capable of reliably transmitting communications and alerts over 2G, 3G, 4G, PMR and Wi-Fi networks.

While technology is important in detecting an emergency situation, the process that follows to ensure a timely and appropriate resolution to an incident is just as critical. If an incident were to happen, how quickly and easily could on-site responders or the emergency services locate and treat the individual? Consideration of how responders can locate the member of staff in an emergency must therefore be a priority. Any lone worker solution should have the ability to provide location information, such as GPS, or for indoor location, Wi-Fi access points or beacons, as staff could be spread over a huge distance on a Quarry/manufacturing site, for example.

In any emergency response scenario, response teams will need to work together to locate the critical employee and to coordinate the first aid team and emergency services. When seconds count instant communication is critical to ensure a timely resolution - especially if a worker's life may be at risk. But rapid communication is also important for a critical machinery incident - if experts or support can be reached with simply the press of a button, then any parts, tools, actions or advice needed can be delivered immediately. Companies that deploy technology solutions such as integrated Lone Worker and communication devices - for example, Push to Talk over Cellular (POC) or PMR systems - can ensure that all employees are connected, optimising communication, collaboration and employee welfare.

There are communication devices available, for example, Smartphones, PMR and IP DECT with integrated lone worker functions to safeguard staff and can be fine-tuned to suit a business' requirements - which is essential to ensure that the end solution fully addresses the needs and nuances of a company and its employees. By working with an unbiased supplier that adopts a consultative approach, businesses can work collaboratively to analyse these components and ensure they get the right solution for their employees, to maximise productivity and safety at the same time. The end result is to achieve the optimum level of tailored functionality that works for your Business and your Employees.



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