



Stay Safe[®]

B U S I N E S S

Lone Worker Safety

Utilities Sector:

Best practice guide to
protecting your lone working staff

Introduction

Dealing with electric, gas, water and sewerage means that those working within the utilities industry are exposed to a wide range of safety hazards on a daily basis. Any accidents that occur can quite often be life changing – having substantial impact on the employees involved and the business.

With health and safety legislation tightening worldwide in recent years, it has never been more pertinent for employers to understand the risks employees face and the steps they should be taking to reduce risk.

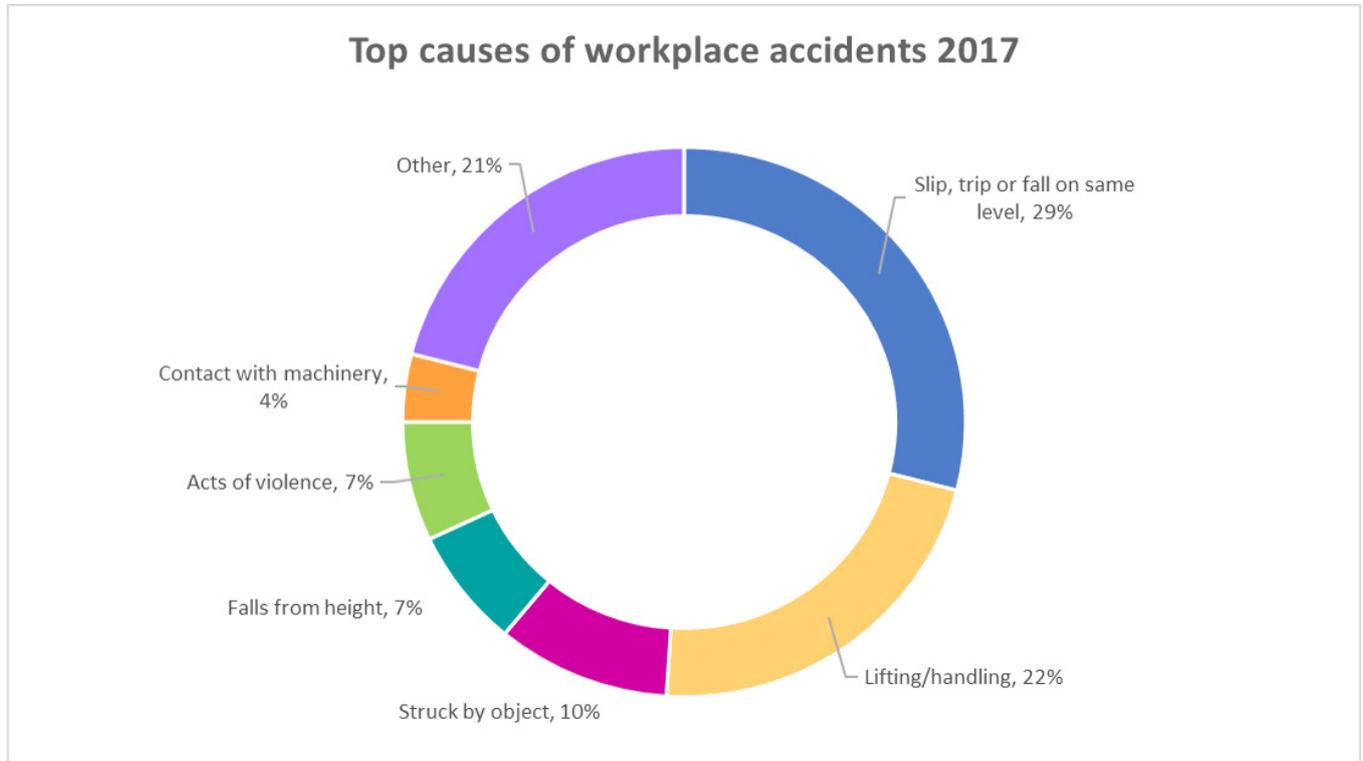
We have produced a practical guide to outline the risks, help you understand your responsibilities as an employer as well as offering advice on how to support your employees – particularly those working alone.

What's in the guide;

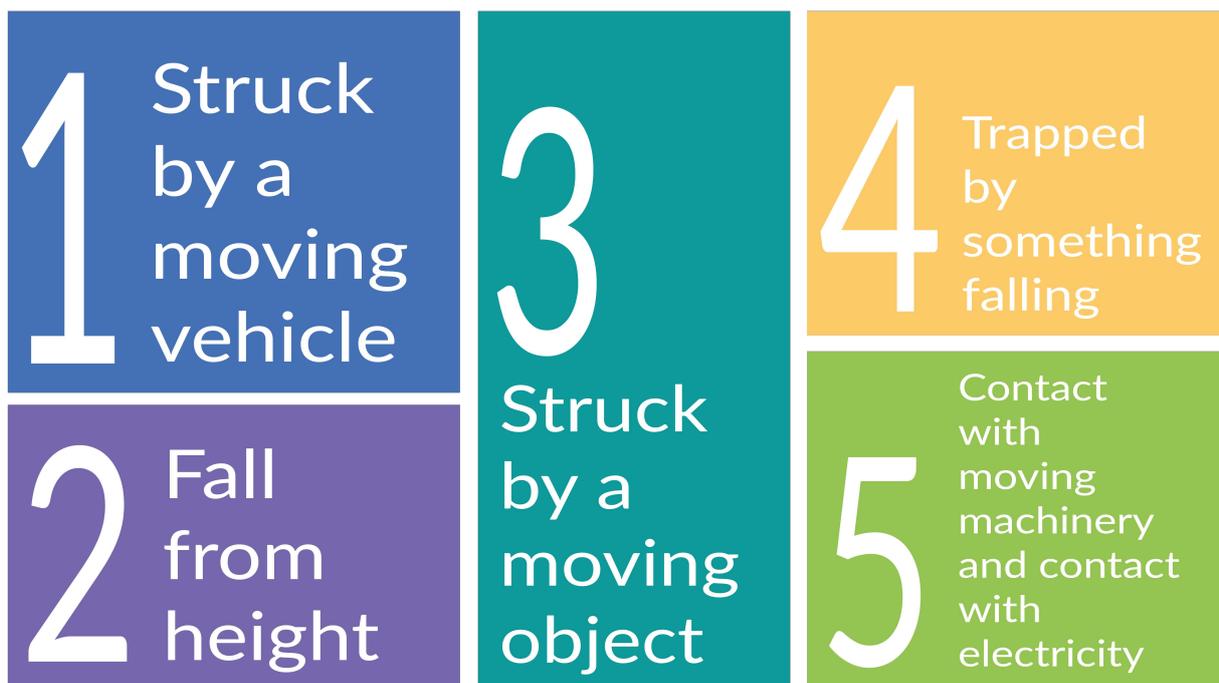
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Risks in the utilities industry

Working across a range of potentially dangerous environments and with hazardous equipment and materials, utility workers are exposed to some of the top causes of workplace accidents and fatalities such as falls and being struck by a moving vehicle.



Top causes of workplace fatalities 2017 (UK)



*HSE (UK) 2017

Other risks to consider:

As well as these most common risks, utility workers are also exposed to other hazards which, if safety measures are not in place, can have detrimental consequences. For example;



Working near water

The hazards associated with water infrastructure are often electrical due to the combination of power and water systems which together, are extremely volatile. Failure to comply with safety precautions could even lead to workers falling into filtration and water tanks, and subsequently drowning.



Working in confined spaces

Working below ground or in confined spaces possesses risks, particularly when working alone or with electrical equipment. If structures are unstable, there is a risk of suffocation or being crushed if there is a collapse.



Working with hazardous substances

Particularly in the gas sector where the use of dangerous substances is common, workers are susceptible to a range of risks including carbon monoxide poisoning, fires and even explosions.



Driving

Traveling on the road is one of the greatest and most uncontrollable risks workers around the world face each day. In fact, it is estimated that more than a quarter of all road traffic accidents involve someone who is at work at the time (HSE 2014). Travel risks are not always immediately considered, yet many utility workers regularly spend time traveling between sites or workplaces.



Working unsocial hours and behind closed-doors

Aggression and violence is one of the top risks employees self-identified in the workplace (HSE 2016). While violence and aggression is usually associated with people-facing industries such as health and social care, utility workers are not exempt from the risk. Many utility employees work out in the field alone alongside members of the public or even carry out home visits, behind closed-doors.



Lone working in the utilities sector

Many job roles within the utilities are now carried out by a lone worker. Whether this be inspecting a pipeline, carrying out maintenance on a remote site, or even visiting properties and homes, working alone is commonplace across many job functions.

And with increasing pressures to enhance profits and productivity, and an increase in automation and new technologies, the number of employees working alone grows year on year.

When working alone, the danger for utility workers is further heightened, as support is less accessible in the case of an emergency. Due to the high-risk nature of the hazards present within the industry, receiving immediate support or medical help could literally be the difference between a minor injury and a life-changing or even fatal one.

Yet working across large sites means lone workers may be completely out of sight and sound if something goes wrong. Calling for assistance can also prove impossible in an industry where loud work environments are likely to drown out a colleague's call for help.

Legal responsibility to lone workers

While there are few pieces of legislation that focus specifically on lone working rules, the duty of care remains the same as with other employees – to ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, the health, safety and welfare of all employees.

Under most lone working regulations around the world, the employer's basic responsibility includes;

- Conducting thorough lone worker risk assessments
- Producing a written health and safety policy and ensuring all employees understand it
- Taking steps to reduce or eliminate risk in order to create a safe working environment
- Providing information, instruction, lone worker training and supervision where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and improving upon lone worker risk assessments and policies



Failure to comply with health and safety legislation can cost the business greatly both short and long term. Some of the costs associated with an unsafe workplace include;

- Covering or replacing staff
- Sick pay
- Lower levels of productivity
- Lost time due to stop work orders
- Time & costs spent investigating an accident
- Compensation
- Legal fines (reaching the millions)
- Loss of business reputation
- Loss of contracts/clients
- Damage to property or equipment
- Other legal costs
- Excess on any insurance claims

Tips for keeping your employees safe

Due to the type of risks present across the utilities industry, additional safety measures must be put in place. Some basic requirements include;

- Carry out thorough risk assessments
- Ensure all staff are trained according to the identified risks. Some examples include; working at height, how to operate machinery safely and defusing an aggressor.
- Equip staff with personal protective equipment such as Hi-Vis clothing, helmets, safety boots and harnesses
- Secure loose equipment when working at height
- Implement emergency procedures including evacuation processes when working on site
- Regularly inspect and maintain equipment, structures and electrical sources
- Encourage risk and incident reporting



Tips for keeping your lone workers safe

The above tips should apply to lone working employees as well as those based on site alongside colleagues. However, there are additional procedures that should be put in place for lone workers based upon the risks they face working in isolation;

Monitoring and checking-in

As lone workers are not directly supervised, procedures should be put in place for monitoring their safety and regularly checking in to make sure they are ok.

Panic and man down

Lone workers should also be equipped with a way to signal for help in an emergency. A panic button will allow them to send an alert at any time while man down alerts will detect a fall and automatically send an alert on the employees behalf.

How can StaySafe protect your lone workers?

Our intuitive app provides a robust and effective way to monitor your lone workers and provide them with a way to signal for help in any situation.

The app monitors the location of lone workers in real-time and allows them to check-in safely once they have finished a lone working or travel session, or signal for help.

The cloud-based monitoring Hub provides an accurate location and up to date safety status so that you can keep an eye on all of your employees in one place. Plus you will be notified of an alert only when you need to be – via SMS, email and optionally, a phone call.

-  **Timed Sessions**
Trigger location monitoring by starting a timed-session.
-  **Session Check-in**
Check-in at set intervals to confirm safety.
-  **Panic**
Send a panic at any time when in need of assistance.
-  **Discreet Panic**
Panic out of view using the phone's power button.
-  **Duress PIN**
Enter a false pin to 'end' a session/alert when confronted.
-  **Non-Movement Alert**
Automatic alerts when a period of non-movement is detected.
-  **Low Signal Mode**
The app will continue to operate without mobile data.
-  **Low Battery Warning**
Remind an employee to charge their device.
-  **Pair with wearable technology**
For quick and discreet check-ins and panic as well as fall detection.
-  **Text & Email Notifications**
Receive alert notifications via text and email.
-  **Phone Call Notifications**
Receive alerts over the phone through an automated message.
-  **Two-way Audio**
Listen-in to verify an alert and communicate with the employee.
-  **Keep an Audit Trail**
Add notes on actions taken to resolve an alert.
-  **Set Response Procedures**
Save business guidelines in the Hub for monitors to refer to.
-  **Reporting**
Run and schedule session and alert reports.
-  **SMS Broadcast**
Communicate with an entire team from within the Hub.
-  **Third Party Monitoring**
Optional 24/7 monitoring and response on your behalf.

StaySafe in action

A number of companies operating within the utilities sector currently use StaySafe to monitor and protect their lone workers. Operating in different areas of the world and across varying job roles, user feedback is testament to the easy to use and flexible nature of the StaySafe solution.



"StaySafe is an efficient and value saving solution that allows us to monitor all of our front-line employees distributed over a large geographical spread, from one place. Our team can now check-in at the touch of a button and supervisors will only be alerted when they need to be, freeing up time and allowing them to focus on other important tasks, while feeling confident that an alert system is in place to assure the safety of front line workers."

- A Jay Medwid, Manager, Operations Effectiveness at TransGas division



The man-down feature as well as location monitoring were particularly important to us when selecting a solution and StaySafe ticked all the boxes. The solution overcomes many of the issues we faced before such as out of hours monitoring and lack of phone signal at some of our sites. We now feel confident that we are meeting our duty of care to our lone working employees around the clock".

- James Oliver, Technical Services Director at Kingswood Air Conditioning



"StaySafe fits seamlessly into our flexible working pattern and is a huge improvement on the manual system we were operating previously. Not only have we saved time as a business, but we also feel confident that we are able to meet our legal duty of care to our employees. Knowing that our engineers have full access to this is great for us as a company but also gives them peace of mind that we are looking out for their welfare!"

- James Evans, Director of i-Systems

Conclusion

Those working within the utilities sectors come against a range of risks on a daily basis. Working alone in such environments poses a new set of risks which require additional safety measures to be put in place.

Providing your employees with lone worker specific equipment and procedures will not only provide protection for your employees but will also allow you as a business to meet your legal duty of care - protecting you from potentially devastating financial costs.

StaySafe's lone worker solution is a cost effective and reliable way to provide a much needed layer of protection to your lone workers.

[To find out more about our lone worker safety solution, visit our website or get in contact today.](#)



Easy to use



Flexible & customisable



Always available



Low cost & scalable