

WORKING ALONE

DID YOU KNOW?

There are 53 million lone workers in the United States, Canada, and Europe combined. To put that statistic into perspective, it represents about 15% of the overall workforce. In fact, the International Labor Organization estimates that 2.3 million work-related fatalities happen each year. Are you doing everything possible to protect the safety of your organization's most valuable assets – your employees? Here are some stats that will make you want to take additional steps to protect your workers:

- 44% of workers say they face personal safety issues in their primary employment practices.
- OSHA states that 48% more assaults occur in the healthcare and social services industries more than any other.
- 62% of social workers have been subject to psychological aggression in the past year, with 86% experiencing this at some point in their careers.
- 15% of social workers have been physically assaulted by clients in the past year, with 30% having experienced this at some point in their career.
- Employee turnover rate is as high as 75% among home healthcare workers.
- 50% of retail workers that are killed are employed alone at late night establishments, such as liquor stores or gas stations.
- An HSE report found that of the workplace fatalities reported between 2012 and 2017, 22 percent were individuals working in the manufacturing industry.
- In 2014, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) reported multiple Oil & Gas-related fatalities in the United States. In fact, the organization reports the Oil & Gas fatality rate is seven times greater than the rate for all U.S. industries
- 600,000 Americans work in the utilities sector as of March 2015.

Many of these utility workers work at water treatment plants. These facilities are often in remote locations away from the base of operations. Often these utility workers at these remote locations have shifts where they are alone.

KEEP IN MIND

Lone workers can make up a large percentage of a workforce, particularly in the manufacturing industry. Many workers in factories, plants, and warehouses can find themselves working alone, even if it usually isn't considered part of their normal duties. There can be times where employees may need to work unsupervised or without assistance, to meet demands in the fast-paced industry. Regardless of the period of time an individual is working alone, health and safety managers need to implement robust and reliable safety systems. Managers must ensure that any lone worker can receive quick emergency assistance should they require it.

Working in remote areas

Working and travelling to remote areas is an inherent part of working in the oil and gas industry. Offshore oil and gas fields, onshore gas pipelines which are remotely located and other characteristics of the oil and gas work make it very common for workers to be working alone and/or working remotely.

A lone worker can be anyone who works alone in a fixed facility or away from his or her typical base. At times, the definition applies to those who work alone in factories or warehouses on nights or weekends. It also applies to traveling workers in construction, utilities, maintenance and repair, agriculture, and other fields.

DANGERS

Working in remote areas introduces a number of safety concerns and hazards that need to be addressed.

In these remote areas, workers face harsh conditions and environments. They must drive/travel long distances and frequently off-road, and if an incident does occur, they are effectively stranded and must find a way to communicate the issue.

These and other nuanced elements of remote or lone worker safety like how much water to carry (more than you think) make for good safety discussions.

Thousands of incidents occur annually that put lone workers on disability—sometimes short-term and often for life.

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Lone workers are an integral part of the oil and gas industry and safeguarding these staff is vital in delivering good service. Businesses are responsible to their employees and to their customers. Shutdowns, incidents and production issues can affect other businesses and large-scale leaks can also be disastrous for the environment. Improving safety in the oil and gas industry is good for everyone and good for the planet.

At Risk

The risks that affect lone workers in most industries affect those in oil and gas too - trips, slips and falls account for 37% of injuries in the sector - though there are additional risks generated by the often remote or offshore nature of the work and exposure or inhalation of hazardous materials. When things do go wrong in oil and gas, they can be devastating, resulting in huge loss of life, product and infrastructure.

Risks include:

- Remote location working, whether off-shore, on the road or along pipelines increases the impact of potential incidents and difficulties in raising alarm and maintaining communication
- Working at heights.
- In confined spaces.
- Alongside high – risk machinery and equipment.
- Accidents including trips, falls, slips
- Toxic and inflammable gases

Lone worker hazards in Oil and Gas Sector

- Hydrocarbon releases
- Fires or Explosions
- Dropped objects

The safety situation for a lone worker is worse than for a worker who is surrounded by fellow workers.

Why? If working alone and immediate medical assistance was not provided in time, the result could be deadly.

Most oil refineries, factories and offshore rigs are also considered as **Explosive Hazardous Areas**, where the atmosphere could be filled with flammable gases, mists, dusts, liquids or vapors that could lead to huge explosions. Due to the Explosive hazardous working environment, the lone working employees within these sectors are not allowed to carry their smartphone devices, as it could be a source of ignition.