# Operational Policy: Lone Worker and Personal Safety (NAG 5)

## Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ

## Statement of Intent:

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act (2015) working in isolated or remote situations has been identified as a hazard that must be managed. In addition, the Regulations say that an employer must have an effective means of communication with an employee who performs remote or isolated work.

A lone worker is defined as someone who:

* Can’t physically see or talk to other staff for the majority of their working week
* Drives through or works in geographical isolation and/or difficult areas to access
* Drives through or works in an area not likely to be accessed by others, such as remote rural areas
* Drives through or works in an area where communications are difficult, such as telecommunication black spots
* Works a sole charge late/early shift
* Is the only person on a BLENNZ site at any given time.

Common risks of working alone include:

* Security
* No access to emergency assistance
* Falling asleep at the wheel during travel
* Being unfamiliar with a new worksite or remote location
* Social isolation
* Organisation isolation
* Technological isolation
* Safety

The Blind & Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ) is committed to ensuring any risks associated with staff working alone or in isolated areas are identified and eliminated so far as is reasonably practical. In the BLENNZ context “working alone” includes all BLENNZ work places, meeting people in their own homes or public spaces, schools and early childhood placements, and driving on the road as part of work.

The identification and minimising or eliminating of risks arising from working alone will occur through:

* Risk assessment
* Giving practical advice and clear guidelines to leadership and staff on how to avoid and manage risks associated with lone working
* Developing the ability of staff to anticipate risks and to manage and deal with them
* Encouraging proper reporting of incidents and near misses and ensuring that staff do not avoid reporting them in the belief they are not serious enough or that it may suggest failure on their part
* Ensuring staff are given regular opportunities to keep in touch and to bring the person together with the rest of the team (e.g. through email, teleconferences, video conferences etc)
* Ensuring staff receive the same information, training and development opportunities and consultation as other employees.
* Ensuring everyone has access to the same or more advanced technology as other employees (dependent upon job requirements)
* Ensuring staff have a first aid certificate
* Ensuring staff have an effective means of getting help quickly in an emergency
* Ensuring staff have regular contact with another person or, if regular contact is impractical, they should check in with another person at regular intervals.

Management and staff share the responsibility for achieving these objectives.

## Policy Guidelines:

1. It is the responsibility of individuals to take care of their own safety and that of others affected by their actions or inactions.

2. Staff must comply with risk assessments and safe systems of work e.g. online calendars must be kept up to date.

3. Shortcomings in systems of work must be reported to the appropriate line manager.

4. Incident Report Forms must be completed in the event of incidents or near misses.

Staff must, if going away from the office:

5. Leave details with an appropriate person (person to be agreed upon in discussion with line manager) of where they plan to go, approximate times they expect to be there, and details of any meetings they have arranged (including the name of the person they are meeting).

6. Ensure a mobile phone is taken with them, that it is fully charged and left on (if hand-held it must not be used whilst driving unless in an emergency situation. Hands-free can be used in accordance with New Zealand law). A charging cable should be kept in all vehicles used for work purposes.

7. Think about where they are going and what they will be doing and any risks related to that location or activity e.g. adverse weather conditions, isolated town or home visit.

8. Ensure they make contact with their line manager if they are delayed or there are changes to their schedule.

9. If working on their own off base during term breaks, staff must text an appropriate person to confirm they have returned home safely at the end of the working day.

When visiting ākonga and their whānau in their homes on their own staff must:

10. Gather information prior to the home visit.

11. Have the approval of their line manager to make the visit.

12. Do not enter the home if the person they are expecting to visit is not present.

13. A whānau member must be present at all times during a home visit.

14. Tell their line manager about any incidents that arose during the meeting.

15. Familiarise themselves with the surroundings in case they need to leave quickly.

16. Don’t block the other person’s line of egress, but make sure their own isn’t blocked.

17. Let the other person enter the room first and make sure they have a clear line of escape.

18. Do not stand too close to the person they are visiting.

19. If they feel threatened by dogs etc, ask politely if they can be moved.

20. Use their professional judgement and discretion in ensuring own personal safety.

Staff working alone at a BLENNZ site must:

21. Have the approval of their line manager to work alone. Any plans to work in term breaks or weekends must be discussed with the appropriate line manager to ensure someone know’s of their whereabouts.

22. Keep all outside doors locked.

23. Keep windows that are not in line of sight closed.

24. If arriving or leaving outside daylight hours, ensure someone knows of your whereabouts.

25. Park as close to the entrance door as is sensibly possible.

26. Only allow access to non BLENNZ staff if planned work has been arranged and notified in advance e.g. cleaners, building service workers etc. If there is any doubt do not allow access to the building.

27. Ensure on long trips that fuel levels in vehicles can cover the km required during isolated trips.

28. If plans change during the day, ensure someone knows changes to their timetable. This could be by phone, email or txt message to the appropriate line manager and administrator.

## Supporting Documents:

[Link to SiteSafe NZ - Lone Workers](https://www.sitesafe.org.nz/guides--resources/practical-safety-advice/lone-workers/)

BLENNZ Child Protection Policy and Appendices

[MBI Website - Protecting Employees who Work Alone](https://www.employment.govt.nz/starting-employment/rights-and-responsibilities/protecting-employees-who-work-alone/)

Approved: 

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Next Review: 2025