

Feature

Safety while working alone

Sophia Gallia looks at guidance for those working alone, which is relevant to gamekeepers.



LIKE THOSE WORKING IN AGRICULTURE OR forestry, gamekeepers are frequently required to work alone. Although this is not against the law, the law does require employers and others to deal with health and safety risks before anyone should be allowed to work alone. The employer is responsible for the health and safety of their employees and any self-employed or contractors they engage. These responsibilities cannot be transferred to anyone else. The employer must assess risks to lone workers and take steps to avoid or control those risks.

Having said all that, employees must take reasonable care of themselves and other people affected by their work and co-operate with their employers in meeting their legal obligations.

First and most important for any employer who has a gamekeeper likely to work alone is to assess likely risks through a thorough risk assessment programme. This should be done annually, or whenever there is a significant change. Employers with five or more employees must record significant findings of risk assessments.

A good risk assessment will highlight things that must be avoided altogether or require at least one other person to be present. It should also highlight where extra training may be necessary, additional supervision and aids. The employer should always discuss health and safety with employees (who will be able to provide valuable advice) and make sure that the employee understands the risks and health and safety ramifications. The employer should ensure that employees are competent to deal with circumstances that are new, unusual or beyond the scope of training.

Employers also need to know specific laws on lone working applying in our industry. Such examples for gamekeepers might include using fire, chemicals or firearms.

Lone workers should not be put at more risk than other employees. Therefore extra risk control measures

may be necessary and precautions should take account of normal work and foreseeable emergencies, eg. fire, equipment failure, illness and accidents. Employers should identify situations where people work alone and ask questions such as:

- Does the work environment present a special risk?
- Is there a safe way in and out for one person?
- Can all the machinery and equipment needed be safely handled by one person?
- Are there any chemicals or hazardous substances being used that may pose a risk to the worker?
- Does the work involve lifting objects too large for one person?
- Is more than one person needed to operate essential controls for the safe running of equipment or transport?
- Is there a risk of violence?
- Are young, pregnant or disabled

workers at risk if they work alone?

- Are there any other reasons why the individual (for example a trainee) may be more vulnerable than others?
- If the lone worker's first language is not English, are suitable arrangements in place to ensure clear communication, especially in an emergency?
- Does a medical condition make the employee unsuitable for working alone? Seek medical advice if necessary.

The Government has produced a useful seven-page document outlining the main things to consider for lone workers. At the end is a list of further reading which may also be helpful.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, READ THE GOVERNMENT'S ADVICE ON LONE WORKING: WWW.HSE.GOV.UK/PUBNS/INDG73.PDF

The everyday work of a gamekeeper involves risk, and much is undertaken alone.



JINDSAY WADDELL