**Please note:** This is an excerpt from the School of Natural Sciences Fieldwork Safety Statement. It is not a complete lone working assessment document and is included for quick reference only. Before partaking in any fieldwork you must read the Fieldwork Safety Statement in its entirety where you will find fieldwork checklists and forms. College policies on lone and out of hours working will be updated in 2018 and new guidelines will be established. You must check for updates to this document before undertaking any lone working.

A separate lone working Risk Assessment form to be held in your Discipline is available from your Safety Officer or local website.

GUIDELINES

AND

RISK ASSESSMENT FOR LONE WORKING

**LONE WORKING**

Lone working is carried out quite regularly. There is a need for practical guidance to assist Heads of Disciplines (HODs) and Supervisors to meet the demands of current legislation. **Lone working by employees and students should be discouraged as far as possible,** but it is recognized that in some situations it is not reasonably practicable to avoid it. Lone working should only be sanctioned by the HOD or Supervisor after a thorough risk assessment has been carried out taking into account the nature of the work, the hostility and location of the site, the qualification and experience of the worker, the climatic conditions and the ability of the worker to undertake the task in hand. **The Supervisor must ensure that a safe system of work as far as is reasonably practicable is being employed in order to reduce the risks from foreseeable hazards to an acceptable level.**

**\*Lone working near or on water is considered extremely high risk and may only be carried out in exceptional circumstances. Please speak with your discipline’s Safety Officer before completing the risk assessment exercise.**

In most cases the lone worker will be a postgraduate student who should be involved in the risk assessment, and the postgraduate must be made aware that they are still under supervision while in the field and have a responsibility to their supervisor back on campus who must take immediate responsibility for his/her safety.

The student must inform the supervisor, department **and** **a named contact** each time they go in the field as to the nature of their work, the hazards involved, and their estimated departure and return times. A system of communications must be put in place and rigidly adhered to so that failure to return can be acted upon within a reasonable time.

Students must be given clear guidelines by their supervisors with checking in arrangements and they must be trained in the use of equipment and techniques required. As well as the danger of personal injury, the possibility of exhaustion or hypothermia should be considered, although any such risk should come to light during the risk assessment and would strongly mitigate against lone working.

Checks on lone workers must be made on a regular and planned basis. The frequency is dictated by the nature of the work and its likely hazards. Checks might take the form of periodic visits by the supervisor or regular phone communications.

Any system for lone working should meet the following criteria. (This applies to both students and staff in a lone working situation.)

1. All health and safety risks should be identified and assessed.

2. Protective and preventative measures should be adequate to control the risk.

3. The lone worker should be medically fit and competent to work alone.

4. Training, instruction and information should be provided to ensure the lone worker fully understands the residual risks associated with the work, the precautions to be taken and how to respond to unplanned events.

5. The monitoring system should provide adequate control of the work being undertaken.

6. All accident data and incidents should be reported to the Discipline Safety Officer and action taken as required.

Lone working control measures as outlined should be regularly audited to ensure their effectiveness. Accident data and incident reports provide a useful indicator of the adequacy of existing controls. Audits enable us to review existing control measures and to identify where changes are needed to maintain a safe working system.

Risk assessments should be reviewed when there is a reason to believe they are no longer valid. It is prudent to plan reviews at regular intervals, possibly yearly.

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|  |  |  | THE INFORMATION INCLUDED HERE IS INTENDED FOR LONE FIELDWORK BUT MUCH OF IT ALSO APPLIES TO GENERAL FIELDWORK. |  |
| **Location** | **Hazard** | **R.A.** | **Control Measures** | **Responsibility** |
| General | Lone Working | High | Discourage this as far as possible and only allow if all precautions have been taken and the risk is low. Never allow for caving, diving, rock climbing, mountaineering, boating or sailing. | Head of Disc. |
|  | Lack of Preparation for lone working. | High | All fieldworkers should have adequate protection which should be examined prior to any work being undertaken. Safety helmets must be worn in quarries and caves and goggles must be worn where there is a possibility of eye damage. All footwear and clothing should be weatherproof and appropriate to the work in hand. |  |
|  | Lack of Training for lone working | High | All staff to receive written advice (MANUAL)  Training to be arranged as suitable e.g. communication, navigation and survival training to be given where applicable. All should have first aid and rescue training and if working near water an ability to swim fifty metres in the conditions likely to be encountered. In remote areas survival skills training may be necessary. |  |

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|  | Lack of Expedition planning for lone working | High | All fieldwork should be carefully planned with emphasis on conditions of terrain, weather etc. and vigilance should be kept at all times and risk assessment of medical hazards studied and control measures implemented. |  |
|  | Fieldwork Conditions for lone working | High | Note conditions prior to work in the field. e.g. extremes of climate, height, snow, ice, marsh, bog, forest, brush fires, o/h power lines, rough seas, confined spaces, mine shafts, cave entrances, etc. |  |
|  | Lack of emergency planning. | High | Ensure that relevant emergency equipment is carried at all times i.e. first aid kit, rations, means of summoning aid, “bivvy” bag, torch, whistle, bright waterproof clothing, relevant maps and compass. |  |
|  | Lack of communication for lone working | High | A suitable system of communication and reporting must be put in place e.g. mobile- phone. In remote areas and where alone for longer than half a day on location a return time must be left with a responsible person who should be asked to raise an alarm after a two hour delay and safe return must also be reported. |  |
|  | Exposure for lone working | High | Plans must be made for the possibility of weather changes and this must be reflected in the spare clothing, etc. that is brought. |  |

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|  | Excavations, potholes, caves, etc. | High | Inspection by competent person for risks of collapse etc. should be made prior to work being undertaken. |  |
|  | Equipment for lone working | High | All equipment should be checked by a competent person prior to fieldwork and damaged or lost equipment should be reported and replaced as soon as possible. Damaged equipment should never be taken on fieldwork. |  |
|  | Transport for lone working | High | All transport used should be adequate for the task, safe and roadworthy, and spares should be carried. All drivers should be licensed for the vehicle in use and they should be medically fit, and all local rules must be adhered to. |  |
|  | Lack of medical fitness of lone workers | High | The lone worker should be medically fit and have the ability to carry out the task in hand. If there is any doubt about the fitness of a lone worker an assessment can be arranged with the College Health Centre prior to work being undertaken. The necessary medical forms should be completed and filed by the supervisor. |  |
|  | Falls on slippery or unstable surfaces. | High | Footwear should have non-slip soles. Avoid cliff -tops, quarries and natural outcrops, tops of overhanging rocks, scree-slopes, wet, icy or algae covered rocks, steep grassy banks, snowfields or snow or water filled gullies. |  |

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|  | Landslides, avalanches or falling rocks. | High | Helmets must be worn when working close to rock faces, on cliffs or in quarries and in caves. These are provided by the dept. Work should be avoided under hanging rocks, loose faces in quarries, cliffs etc. and in snowfields, and in snow filled and water filled gullies. |  |
|  | Falls from fences, walls and into ditches. | Med. | Field boundaries should be crossed by gates or stiles and not by jumping or climbing. |  |
|  | Hunting and Military areas. | High | Follow all official notices and obtain permission from the Range Officer for military sites, and from landowners for hunting and shooting areas. |  |
|  | Darkness | High | Lone working should never be allowed in urban, parkland or hazardous areas, after dark (or pre-dawn). It should be discouraged. |  |
|  | Minor cuts, bruises, sprains, bites | Med. | A well-stocked first aid kit should be carried at all times. Fieldworkers should have up to date tetanus injections and any other medication appropriate to their work e.g. in tropical climates. |  |

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| Coasts, cliffs and tidal- areas. | Trapped by tides. | High | Consult tide tables and seek local advice where applicable prior to work. Identify escape routes and ensure firm conditions under foot. |  |
|  | Drowning by being swept to sea. | High | Consult the tide tables and weather forecast. Avoid working in storms, high waves and swell forecasts. Obtain local advice on hazards e.g. freak waves, quicksand from Gardaí or Coastguard. Always maintain a safe distance from edge of sea. |  |
| Rivers | Drowning by being swept away. | High | Avoid rivers in flood or with deep fast flowing water. Maintain a safe distance from the edge. Ensure firm underfoot and check barriers, fences etc. prior to work. |  |
| Bogs, swamps and pools. | Drowning. | High | Avoid working in these conditions or crossing such terrain. |  |
| Farms | Injury from animals or machinery. | High | Obtain permission from the landowners and ascertain where dangerous animals are. Avoid interfering with any machinery. |  |

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| Disused sites. | | Explosives, rock-falls, slurry pits, moving machinery. | | High | | Obtain permission to work on site and follow all safety procedures. Lone working should be prohibited here. | |  | |
| Roadside locations | | Struck by moving vehicles | | High | | Wear high visibility clothing. Avoid locations where on-coming traffic cannot see the worker or must swerve to miss the worker. Inform Gardaí if applicable. Avoid motorway sites unless vital, but lone working here is not recommended. | |  | |
| Urban areas. | | Attack or injury from traffic. | | High | | Lone working should be avoided especially at night. The danger of attack or mugging is greater than many envisage. | |  | |
| Railway locations | | Struck by moving vehicle | | High | | Obtain permission to work on site and request and follow all safety precautions and rules applicable. | |  | |
| Karst areas | | Ankle injury and falls. | | High | | Care should be taken when walking, sampling or surveying in these areas due to erosion of rock. | |  | |
| Industry sites, mines, quarries. | | Explosives, rock-falls, slurry pits, moving machinery. | | High | | Obtain permission to work on site and request and follow all safety procedures and instructions. Lone working should be discouraged. | |  | |

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To be completed by lone worker and left with Gardai, landlady, ranger, warden or other such person

NAME ……………………………………………………

COLLEGE ADDRESS ……………………………………………………………………………………………

Head of department ……………………………………………………………

Home Address ………………………………………………………………………………………………………….

MOBILE PHONE NO. ……………………………………………………………

PLANNED ACTIVITY

TIME AND DATE OF DEPARTURE ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

PLACE OF DEPARTURE ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

ESTIMATED RETURN TIME ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

ROUTE ------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

TRANSPORT DETAILS

WALKING/CLIMBING/VEHICLE -------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

REGISTRATION NO. OF VEHICLE --------- ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

MAKE & COLOUR OF VEHICLE --------- ----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

EQUIPMENT CARRIED

WATERPROOF CLOTHING COLOUR -------------------------- WINTER CLOTHING COLOUR --------------------------------

EMERGENCY FOOD --------------- WHISTLE ---------------------- MAP/COMPASS ---------------------------------

ICE AXE/CRAMPONS/POLYBAG ----------- 1ST AID KIT ------------------- SPARE CLOTHES -----------------------------------