

Working Alone **in Road Transport**

A practical safety and wellbeing guide

For drivers, operators and transport teams

Working alone is part of everyday transport work.

Feeling unsupported should not be.

How to use this guide

This guide is designed for team briefings, risk-assessment reviews and practical conversations with people who work alone. It supports, but does not replace, competent advice or an organisation's legal duties.

For workers

Use the guide to understand what support should exist, how to raise a concern and what should happen after an incident.

For operators

Compare your real arrangements with the risk, contact, escalation, parking, training and recovery actions in this guide.

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Keep the separate one-page checklist with this guide.

A "no" or "not sure" answer is a prompt for action, not a reason to blame the worker.

Working Alone in Road Transport

This guide is for people who spend time working without close or direct supervision, including HGV and van drivers, couriers, delivery workers, night workers, warehouse and yard staff, mechanics on call, roadside technicians and self-employed operators. It is also for managers, dispatch teams and fleet operators responsible for planning work and responding when something goes wrong.

The guide combines current Health and Safety Executive guidance with practical steps for road transport. It is not a replacement for a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, competent health and safety advice, drivers' hours advice, emergency procedures or medical care.

What lone working means in transport

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as people who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. HSE expressly includes delivery drivers and people working away from a fixed base. Employers must manage the risks before people work alone, including where contractors or self-employed people are engaged.[1] [2]

In road transport, lone working can include more than driving. It may involve waiting at an isolated site, opening a trailer in darkness, carrying out a vehicle check in a lay-by, making a doorstep delivery, dealing with a breakdown, working alone in a warehouse, completing a night security check or sleeping in a cab away from home.

The person may be in regular contact with a traffic office and still be a lone worker. Phone contact, telematics and tracking can help, but none of them automatically removes the risks created by isolation.

Why transport requires its own approach

Generic lone-worker templates often assume that the worker can stop and call a supervisor whenever they feel concerned. Transport work is more complex. A driver cannot safely handle a phone while moving, mobile signal may be poor, delivery windows create pressure, secure parking may be unavailable, and drivers' hours rules can limit when contact should take place.

HSE says work-related road risk should be managed in the same way as risk at a fixed site. A driving-for-work risk assessment should consider the journey, the driver or rider and the vehicle, as well as lone-worker vulnerability and access to suitable welfare facilities.[3]

Many transport workers spend most of a long shift alone. The lawful driving, duty and rest limits depend on the vehicle, operation and rules that apply. Under the assimilated rules, daily driving is normally limited to 9 hours, extendable to 10 hours twice a week, with at least 11 hours' daily rest, reducible in specified circumstances.[7] Different limits apply to operations under GB domestic rules.[8]

The practical point is simple: welfare contact must be designed around the work and the law, not added as an afterthought.

The transport-specific risk picture

Isolation and delayed help

The same event can become more serious when nobody is nearby. A fall from a cab step, a sudden illness, an assault, a trailer injury or a roadside breakdown may require immediate help. HSE says employers must make sure workers can receive assistance if they become ill or injured and should provide suitable training, supervision, monitoring and support.[1] [2]

Unsafe locations and parking pressure

Parking availability affects safety decisions. In the Department for Transport's March 2022 England audit, 21,164 vehicles were observed across on-site and off-site overnight locations against 16,761 on-site spaces. The report calculated a 27% shortfall if all observed vehicles were to use on-site facilities, equivalent to 4,473 excess vehicles against capacity.[4] These figures describe the 2022 England audit, not a current UK-wide total. They nevertheless demonstrate why a credible lone-working plan cannot simply tell drivers to use secure parking without also addressing route planning, approved alternatives, escalation and the right to stop or reroute when the planned location is not available.

Freight crime and suspicious approaches

NaVCIS Freight reports that in 2025 it processed 3,424 UK freight-crime notifications from police and industry partners, with an estimated cost-price loss of £65 million. NaVCIS also recorded 265 arrests directly related to freight crime.[5]

These are notifications received by NaVCIS, not a complete count of every UK incident. They support a practical need for clear instructions on suspicious approaches, load information, secure parking, incident reporting and when to call the police.

Abuse, aggression and customer contact

The strongest recent transport-adjacent evidence found for doorstep delivery comes from USDAW's 2025 survey of more than 400 retail home delivery drivers, mainly in grocery delivery. Among respondents, 77% reported abuse in the previous 12 months, 13% reported physical violence and 26% said they had refused a delivery because they feared for their safety.[6]

These findings must not be presented as representative of every HGV, courier, van or transport worker. They do show that abuse and safety-related refusal are genuine issues in a defined delivery workforce.

Fatigue, stress and disconnection

Working alone can increase stress because decisions are made without immediate support. Night work, unfamiliar sites, delays, poor facilities, traffic pressure, family separation and uncertainty about where to stop can all add strain. A good system makes it normal to raise concerns early rather than waiting for a crisis.

What operators should put in place

1. A transport-specific lone-working risk assessment

The assessment should cover the real work, not just the job title. It should consider people, tasks, vehicles, journeys, locations and time of day. It should also include foreseeable events such as:

- vehicle breakdowns, collisions and road closures;
- loading, unloading, coupling and uncoupling;
- falls, sudden illness and manual-handling injuries;
- isolated depots, yards, lay-bys and delivery points;
- insecure or unavailable parking;
- verbal abuse, threats, violence and harassment;
- suspicious approaches, freight crime and theft;
- poor mobile signal, device failure or missed check-ins;
- fatigue, stress, distress and post-incident reactions;
- workers who may be at greater risk because of disability, health, pregnancy, language, experience, age or previous incidents.

The assessment should be reviewed after an incident, a near miss, a route or contract change, a new shift pattern, a vehicle or technology change, or evidence that workers do not trust the process.

2. Clear contact and escalation arrangements

Every person working alone should know:

- who is monitoring them during the relevant shift;
- when routine contact is expected;
- what counts as a missed check-in;
- what the controller or manager will do next;
- when a welfare concern becomes an emergency;
- how to raise a concern without using a phone while driving;
- who holds the most reliable location, route and vehicle information.

Avoid systems that depend on one manager's personal phone, particularly outside office hours. The person receiving an alert must have the authority and information to act.

3. A realistic missed check-in procedure

A written escalation process might include:

1. Check whether the worker is expected to be driving, resting, loading or in a known no-signal area.
2. Attempt contact using the agreed method without creating pressure to answer while driving.
3. Check available route, vehicle and site information in line with the organisation's privacy arrangements.
4. Contact the nominated site, depot or emergency contact where appropriate.
5. Escalate to emergency services if there is reason to believe the worker faces immediate danger, serious injury or sudden illness.
6. Record what happened and review whether the procedure worked.

The plan should specify timeframes that match the level of risk. A two-hour check-in interval may be reasonable for one task and completely unsuitable for another.

4. Safe stopping and parking decisions

Drivers should never be expected to protect a schedule, load or parking plan at the expense of immediate personal safety. Operators should provide:

- route plans with suitable stopping options;
- a process for reporting that the planned site is full, closed or unsafe;
- approved alternatives where possible;
- clear authority to move, reroute or seek police help when necessary;
- instructions for suspicious approaches and attempted theft;
- a fair review process that does not blame the worker for a reasonable safety decision.

The written procedure should recognise that parking shortages and local conditions can make the original plan unworkable.

5. Training that reflects real situations

Training should cover more than how to press an alarm. People need to know how to recognise danger, withdraw, de-escalate where safe, preserve evidence, report a concern and access support afterwards. Scenario-based discussions can include:

- an aggressive customer or site contact;
- a suspicious request to move or open a vehicle;
- a missed welfare call in a poor-signal area;
- a breakdown at night;
- a delivery point that feels unsafe;
- a colleague who sounds distressed or confused;
- a worker who reports harassment from a customer, client or contractor.

6. Support after an incident

The first response should focus on safety and care, not paperwork or blame. A practical sequence is:

1. Confirm immediate safety and medical needs.
2. Contact emergency services where required.
3. Arrange a safe place, relief driver, recovery or transport home if needed.
4. Preserve relevant evidence without pressuring the worker to give a full account while distressed.
5. Explain the reporting and support options.
6. Agree follow-up contact and a reasonable return-to-work approach.
7. Review the risk assessment and controls.

Normal reactions after a frightening event can include disturbed sleep, replaying the incident, anger, anxiety, tearfulness, numbness, poor concentration and reluctance to return to the location. Persistent, worsening or overwhelming symptoms deserve professional support.

Daily rest and welfare contact

DVSA defines rest as an uninterrupted period during which a driver may freely dispose of their time. Under the assimilated rules, regular daily rest is at least 11 continuous hours. A reduced daily rest is at least 9 continuous hours and may be used only in the permitted circumstances. A regular daily rest may also be split into at least 3 uninterrupted hours followed by at least 9 uninterrupted hours.[9]

This does not mean every voluntary conversation automatically invalidates rest. It does mean an employer should not impose work, mandatory availability or repeated compulsory contact that prevents the driver from freely disposing of the period. DVSA says an on-call driver must remain free to choose whether to answer and may return to work only after completing the required rest, unless the work is an emergency.[9]

Reasonable welfare arrangements usually include:

- planned contact at the beginning and end of duty;
- a driver-initiated route for non-emergency support during rest;
- no routine mandatory calls through a protected daily-rest window;
- emergency contact arrangements that are clearly separated from routine check-ins;
- competent drivers' hours advice for the operator's actual work pattern.

Third-party harassment and transport work

Transport workers may face harassment from customers, clients, site staff, contractors, passengers or members of the public. The Employment Rights Act 2025 contains a new third-party harassment duty, scheduled to take effect on 30 October 2026 in England, Wales and Scotland. It will oblige employers not to permit third parties to harass employees. The statutory test refers to harassment in the course of employment and whether the employer failed to take all reasonable steps to prevent it.[10] [11] [12]

At the evidence-review date, the provision remained prospective and future dates were subject to parliamentary processes. Employers should prepare by identifying higher-risk situations, consulting workers, setting standards for customers and clients, providing reporting routes, responding to complaints and taking proportionate preventive action. This section provides general information, not legal advice. Northern Ireland has separate equality and discrimination law arrangements.

Self-employed and owner-drivers

Self-employed people can still face the same practical risks of isolation, violence, illness, fatigue and unsafe locations. HSE's lone-working guidance is also relevant to people who work alone for themselves and to organisations that engage contractors.[1] [2]

If you are self-employed, put your own minimum arrangements in writing:

- share your intended route or work area with a trusted person;
- agree what a missed check-in means and what they should do;
- keep emergency and breakdown contacts easy to access;
- plan safe stopping options before the shift;
- do not share detailed load, route or overnight-location information publicly;
- record incidents and near misses, even where no police report is made;
- seek medical or emotional support early after a difficult incident.

Nine-question lone-working sense check

Use these questions with workers and managers. A “no”, “not sure” or “sometimes” answer is a prompt for action, not a reason to blame the individual.

1. Does someone know where the worker is expected to be?
 2. Is there a clear routine check-in arrangement?
 3. Is there a written response for a missed check-in?
 4. Are safe stopping or parking alternatives available where reasonably practicable?
 5. Is there a clear process for abuse, threats, harassment or suspicious approaches?
 6. Can the worker raise a concern without using a phone while driving?
 7. Are emergency, breakdown and escalation contacts current and accessible?
 8. Does the plan respect drivers’ hours, daily rest and the worker’s ability to disconnect?
 9. Will the organisation support the worker after an incident without blame?
- Download the separate fillable checklist to record answers, actions, owners and review dates.

Emergency and wellbeing support

Immediate danger, serious injury or crime in progress: call 999 or 112.

Urgent medical advice when it is not a life-threatening emergency: contact NHS 111

where available in your nation, or use the relevant local urgent-care service.

Samaritans: call 116 123 for free, 24 hours a day.

DriverWell: free wellbeing support and practical resources for transport workers at driverwell.co.uk. The non-emergency DriverWell WhatsApp number is 07446 188202.

DriverWell is not an emergency service.

References

1. HSE, *Protecting lone workers: How to manage the risks of working alone*, INDG73(rev4)
2. HSE, *Lone working: Protect those working alone*
3. HSE, *Employers: driving and riding safely for work*
4. Department for Transport, *National survey of lorry parking (2022): part 1*
5. NaVCIS Freight: current freight-crime reporting and prevention information
6. USDAW, *Campaign to End Violence and Abuse Against Retail Workers: Survey Results 2025*
7. GOV.UK, *Drivers' hours: Assimilated rules*
8. GOV.UK, *Drivers' hours: GB domestic rules*
9. DVSA, *Drivers' hours and tachographs: goods vehicles*
10. Department for Business and Trade, *Employment Rights Act timeline update*
11. Business.gov.uk, *Workplace sexual harassment and third-party harassment*
12. Employment Rights Act 2025, section 21

DriverWell is the free wellbeing platform for transport workers. This guide provides general safety and wellbeing information and does not replace professional legal, medical, health and safety or drivers' hours advice.