Executive Summary

It has been said that we live in an increasingly connected world, with the advancement of new technology, 24 hour news culture and continuing global economy, we are all becoming better - and more - connected.

But the same cannot be said for those estimated six million lone workers in the UK. A considerable chunk of UK employees work in isolation, and in contrast to the global village we are all said to live in, more workers than ever before remain physically independent from their employer.

While it is not actually illegal to work alone or unsupervised in the UK, the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires by law that employers make provisions to provide equipment and procedures to control the risks of working alone.

However many of these basic requirements do little to support mobile lone workers.

Mobile lone workers – the increasing risks

Lone workers are employed in a range of different sectors, with many mobile workers working in remote areas and travelling as part of their daily working lives.

According to research by the British Security Industry Association, the group facing the highest levels of risk are transport and logistics staff.

Many of these are drivers, including long-distance HGV, road haulage, and local delivery drivers. Research from the BSIA suggest demand for lone worker protection is set to rise in the UK's transport sector, with employees facing increased risk from physical violence, armed robbery and verbal threats. (http://www.bsia.co.uk/home/lone-worker-transport-guide-bsia)

Other mobile lone workers facing social and environmental risks include railway network workers, bus and coach drivers, maintenance and utilities staff, Cash in Transit drivers, sales representatives, community healthcare workers and those in the construction and manufacturing sector.

Employers of lone workers in this sector will often use a vehicle tracking system to keep in contact with their mobile workers, however these are not ideal, as they often only safeguard the vehicle and not the person, and therefore do not address the social and environmental risks when the person leaves their vehicle.

Many organisations still use a manual 'check-in' procedure where employees working alone will telephone managers or other staff at certain times to report on their whereabouts.

Another alternative often used is the 'buddy up' technique where remote workers operate in pairs. These methods are flawed as in emergency situations, where speed of response is critical, they are also potentially life-threatening.

Connexion2's lone worker device, Identicom, is a discreetly-styled I.D badge which allows a worker to activate a 'Red Alert' by pressing the button on the back of the device if a worker is at risk of verbal abuse or attack.

The alert is sent to an Alarm Receiving Centre' (ARC) which gives a user 24/7 support through Identicom and can monitor the situation through audio, dialling directly into a police control room if necessary.

An integrated approach to lone working

It also has GPS and can capture images*.

Identicom, which has BS 8484 accreditation, also has a sensor which can monitor 'Man Down' situations if a lone worker slips, trips or falls.

Through the SoloProtect solution, the device will come with training, in-house customer service, network fees and monthly reporting.

For mobile lone workers on their own however, this is often not enough.

The solution for this is a mobile workforce management tool.

Lone Worker Solutions

SoloProtect's Mobile Workforce Management (MWM) has a variety of functions which can provide information through GPS to help managers locate lone workers when merged with the SoloProtect package.

MWM is an online portal which allows and encourages two-way communication from managers to end-users. It has a number of features which makes the management and reporting of lone workers quicker, easier and more transparent to those at every level across the organisation.

It is designed as a tool for two-way communication, and enables vital information to be exchanged for the safety of staff, and is not simply a mechanism for a manager to see where employees are located.

Used in conjunction with a lone worker Identicom device, MWM can enhance a company's broader communication structure with a number of benefits.

There are three levels included in Connexion2's newly-rebranded Mobile Workforce Management (MWM) tool; WorkSafe, WorkSmart and WorkSure.

Operationally, the fully inclusive MWM solution can help managers become better connected with staff and more visible through a range of reporting functions gained via data from GPS enabled devices.

For example, the dashboard function allows a manager to see regular location updates, status checks and an 'audit trail' of lone worker movements.

The portal also allows 'Geofencing' which can be set-up to trigger an alert if a lone worker crosses a 'virtual fence' and enters a potentially remote or dangerous area.

Lone workers with the mobile device app are also able to access job scheduling information and send time and attendance confirmation to management.

As a workforce management tool, managers can allocate new tasks to specific team members and receive information when jobs are completed by their lone workers.

Additionally, Identicom mobile users can also 'scan' with their phones when internal operations or jobs have been completed, using the Near Field Communications (NFC) tag simply by placing the smartphone near the designated point of scanning. This is then automatically logged within the MWM reporting function for managers to see.

This technology can empower managers as it increases staff visibility, improves resources and helps drive productivity.

Employers who want to improve the connectivity of their mobile workforce should look at the bigger picture. Lone working is just one piece of a bigger organisational strategy.
An integrated approach to lone working

Within your organisation, before taking out any workforce management portal, a number of questions need to be asked.

- How do your staff currently communicate?

- How can this be improved?

- How can the risks to lone workers be limited?

- How does this comply with health and safety legislation?

- How can workers feel safer in their job?

The benefits of asking these initial questions and communicating with your mobile lone workers can greatly ease fears about any GPS technology.

Safety or Invasion?

GPS is a relatively new technology, and like any service or technology, people can resist change, particularly one that could involve the perception of being 'checked upon'.

When CCTV cameras were first introduced in the UK, people began believing they were constantly being watched and monitored. Now, however CCTV cameras are widely accepted to be a necessary precaution and go unnoticed by the public.

The dramatic shift in opinion could in turn lead to GPS technology devices being considered the same, and with Mobile Workforce Management, employees can have peace of mind.

A cost-effective lone worker policy

Financially, a merged lone worker policy and mobile workforce management system has great benefits for organisations.

Updated estimates show the total cost associated with workplace injuries and ill health in Great Britain in 2010/11 was £13.8 billion. This is the most recent data available. (http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/cost.htm)

An organisation that is guilty of corporate manslaughter is liable on conviction to a fine under the Corporate Manslaughter Act (2007).

Recent reports show that there are harsher penalties for those organisations who neglect safety in the workplace.

With the SoloProtect solution and Mobile Workforce Management (MWM), an entire communication infrastructure can develop a policy which helps keep people safe and your organisation productive.

The value of a fully inclusive lone worker and mobile workforce management system will help protect lone workers, improve workplace efficiency and communication, drive productivity and lead to a much safer and more connected mobile workforce.

Visit www.SoloProtect.com or call 0844 826 2828 for more information.

An integrated approach to lone working