

# LONE WORKER SAFETY

## How Wireless Equipment Can Improve Safety in the Field

By Rick Pedley

**When workers are alone in the field, they are largely responsible for their own safety and health. They may have to deal with a range of potential hazards and difficult working conditions on their own, which can lead to incidents and injuries.**

**So, what does it take** to keep lone workers safe in the field? In the digital age, companies and safety managers can use wireless technology to stay connected to lone workers to protect their safety and health. This article describes the latest workplace safety technology and how these devices can keep lone workers safe on the job.

### Why Safety Gear May Not Be Enough

Protecting lone workers usually includes providing the proper safety gear and equipment, such as sun and heat protection, flame-resistant clothing, night visibility, and fall prevention. This equipment protects lone workers from all types of hazards, especially if they are working outdoors, on elevated surfaces or near other potential hazards. In addition to this equipment, lone workers should have regular access to drinking water to avoid dehydration and heat exhaustion. All company vehicles should have water on board to keep workers hydrated throughout the day.

But this equipment may not be enough when it comes to protecting lone workers. If these workers are not connected to the rest of their team, it may take their colleagues some time to respond if something goes wrong in the field.

### Protecting Lone Workers With Wireless Digital Devices

Wireless technology can help companies stay connected to workers as they contend with a range of hazards, including heat exhaustion, fatigue, dehydration and poor air quality. If something goes wrong in the field or working conditions change suddenly, these teams can take action immediately, which reduces the chances of workplace injuries.

Some wireless adapters can transform gas detectors into wireless gas monitoring devices, so companies and safety managers can respond as quickly as possible in the event of an emergency. If toxic gases are present, the adapter can send an automatic alert to those monitoring workers so the workers can leave the area



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or protect themselves with the proper gear. Alerts can be sent to the worker's smartphone or computer so they can keep tabs on various working conditions throughout the day.

Wireless devices can also monitor the movements of lone workers. If no movement is recorded for several minutes, those monitoring the situation receive an automatic alert so they can respond as quickly as possible if the worker is injured. Companies can also use wireless GPS trackers to monitor the locations of workers in real time. If a truck or vehicle is delayed or stops moving, these devices send an automatic alert so those monitoring vehicles can respond immediately if an incident should occur.

### Maintaining Wireless Technology

As effective as this new technology can be, these devices can only work properly if companies maintain their wireless safety equipment. To better protect employees in the field, companies should perform regular testing to ensure that remote monitors and sensors are operating as expected. If a device fails or stops recording information, remote workers will not be able to depend on this additional safety net, which could put them at

risk. Those using this technology should set some time aside to make sure every device is functioning properly.

### Keeping Workers Informed

Some employees may perceive these technological advances as Big Brother in the field. They may be accustomed to working in isolation, and these devices can seem more like an invasion of privacy than a useful tool intended to protect them from potential hazards.

Companies can avoid this misperception by educating workers on the benefits of this technology. Employees should understand that these devices will be used to protect them from dangerous working conditions. If an emergency should occur, these devices may be the worker's first line of defense against serious injury. Companies should organize safety training sessions so employees can learn more about how these devices work in the field.

### Conclusion

As companies begin investing in this new technology, lone workers can stay connected to colleagues, managers and workplace safety technicians. Over time, these advances will improve the safety and health of all types of lone workers. **PSJ**

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