

# Protecting a new generation of lone workers

The rise in lone workers is reshaping the modern workforce. This trend is driven by factors such as the shift to remote work, advancements in technology, and a growing focus on employee protection. While industries like transport and small retail have traditionally had more lone workers, this trend is now expanding into other sectors, including office environments. Lone working offers many benefits for businesses and customers, but it also brings unique challenges, especially in enhancing the safety and well-being of employees.

We discussed the latest trends in lone worker safety with Securitas experts, Dieter Blommaerts, Director Track and Trace Solutions, Olle Lindskog, Global SOC Director, Morten Sommer Mikkelsen, Head of Solution Offering.



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## WHAT'S DRIVING THE BUSINESS NEED FOR LONE WORKER SAFETY SOLUTIONS?

**Dieter Blommaerts (DB):** The growth in lone worker solutions is due to companies becoming more aware of the need to protect their lone workers. Legislation is a big factor – in multiple countries in Europe it is a legal requirement to protect lone workers and employees working in hazardous environments. The financial and reputational costs associated with workplace incidents involving

lone workers are significant. This also drives companies to focus on employee protection.

**Morten Mikkelsen (MM):** There's a moral responsibility beyond just following the rules. Companies today are more focused on values and purpose, which includes protecting employees. It's about staying compliant with legislation, but more importantly, it's about doing the right thing as a business.

**Olle Lindskog (OL):** The market is also driving this need because there

are more lone workers now. Many industries have shifted from having two people on a task to just one, thanks to technological advances. The business landscape changed post-Covid, with more remote work and less occupied offices. For example, in petrol stations, roles that used to be separate, like floor staff and cashiers, are now combined due to self-checkouts and video analytics, creating more lone workers.

**DB:** It's true that the lone worker market has grown, but some businesses still haven't fully addressed the need to



protect their employees. I think it's because some scenarios are new – there's a new generation of lone workers.

## HOW HAS THE LONE WORKER LANDSCAPE CHANGED?

**MM:** In 2023, the BERG insight study found that around 236 million people were employed in Europe. Of these, about 45 million work in industries where lone workers are common. This doesn't even include office workers or those working from home.

**DB:** There's a misconception about what makes someone a lone worker. Some think that in crowded places, lone workers don't exist. However, if you work in a busy building yet spend most of your time unaccompanied, you are a lone worker. It's a shift in perception for businesses.

**MM:** There's also a cultural shift happening. Health and safety expectations are evolving. Just like helmets and protective boots became standard on construction sites, using lone worker devices will become the norm as companies focus more on safety and employee well-being.

**DB:** In certain industries, like transport and logistics, there's a shortage of workers, such as truck drivers. Companies that show they have a commitment to the well-being of their employees – not just through pay but with comprehensive support – can attract and retain better talent.

**MM:** More roles are being classified as lone working and we're moving beyond traditional high-risk industries. It's not always about danger; it's about ensuring that someone is protected even if they're out of sight or working alone for long periods.

## WHAT ROLE DOES TECHNOLOGY EVOLUTION PLAY IN LONE WORKER SAFETY?

**OL:** Technology is a key factor in the rise of lone workers. It's also the driving force behind safety devices like personal protection alarms and smartphone apps. But you need connectivity to support services. Without a reliable security partner, it's just an alarm. Technology and devices are only as effective as the people and services they're connected to.

**MM:** Exactly, technology alone isn't always enough for lone worker safety, but it's the enabler. For instance, lone

worker devices use GPS to locate employees and can detect 'loss of verticality.' If someone is on the ground for a while, it triggers an alarm. The employee might not be able to push a button, so they can get help quickly.

**DB:** Lone worker safety is accessible through an app or a device, giving businesses the flexibility to choose what's best for their employees based on role types and equipment. Different businesses have different needs – apps work best for some, while others opt for devices. The choice should be based on the type of risks faced by lone workers, the location, and the industry.

**MM:** There are many options for businesses looking to protect their employees, whether it's hardware, software or adding services such as alarm monitoring, environmental monitoring, and mobile dispatch. But the connectivity is imperative. You need connectivity and the support of a reliable security partner to make the technology work effectively. People are still at the heart of the keeping lone workers safe.

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