



12 June 2023

Email:

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Request No: 07945-23

Subject: Lone Working for VCO/Make Ready Operative Roles

Request:	Date Received:	15/03/2023
	Date of Monitoring:	16/03/2023
	Date of Response:	12/06/2023

Thank you for your request for information received on 15 March 2023 which was dealt with under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Health and Social Care Trust has now completed its search for the information you requested and that is detailed below.

Question 1

I would like to know the rules for lone working for vco/make ready operative. Working alone at ED until 2am at weekends and driving to stations and working alone all day. Is this seen as being safe working practice.

Answer 1

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service utilises the NIAS policy in relation to Lone Workers to ensure that safe systems of work and safe working practices are being undertaken in relation to and by lone workers within our service.

The NIAS, train, supervise and monitor lone workers in addition to keeping in touch with them and responding to any incidents that arise or that they are involved in.

Where staff are considered to be lone workers risk assessments are undertaken to identify risk, to determine the likelihood and severity of any risk and to devise and implement actions to eliminate or control the risk.

A risk assessment has been undertaken in relation to Vehicle Cleaning Operatives (VCOs) and the general risks associated with the cleaning of NIAS premises and vehicles, this includes in relation to lone working.

The following controls are in place in relation to VCOs and lone working within NIAS:

- Staff who are lone working are based at NIAS and other HSCT sites only and are not expected to travel to sites of external organisations during their shift
- Staff are given familiarisation training at each site



- EVC Managers and Supervisors are aware of staff rotas including location and working hours of staff
- Staff who are lone working use mobile phones to maintain contact with their supervisor or NIAS Control room or 999 Emergency Services as appropriate, when transporting NIAS Vehicles they have access to radios on vehicles for this purpose
- Staff are advised to ensure that their mobile phone has sufficient charge
- The location of NIAS vehicles can be remotely tracked if an incident occurs whilst transporting a vehicle
- Staff who are lone working do not carry out higher risk activities such as working at height, handling large items
- NIAS Operational staff and HSC staff are often present on site alongside NIAS VCOs when cleaning duties are being undertaken, for example at hospital emergency departments or in stations.

From 03.04.23 Vehicle Cleaning Services within NIAS are changing and staff who are impacted by these changes and who may consequently find themselves in the position of lone working will be updated on the processes that they need to follow and which NIAS has in place to support lone working.

With these mitigations in place and with the increased awareness of VCO staff who may undertake this in relation to the policies and procedures related to lone working, the NIAS have endeavoured to manage any health and safety risks regarding VCO staff who may undertake lone working.

I hope the above fully assists you.

Please note that, under the Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations, if you wish to publish or otherwise use this information besides for your own means, you will need to seek our permission to do so.

If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible, or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to the Director of Planning, Performance and Corporate Services, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) HSC Trust, Site 30, Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 8SG.

If following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision maker, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint under Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act, to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the Trust has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act.

Website: ni@ico.org.uk

Post: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow,
CHESHIRE SK9 5AF

Telephone: 028 9027 8757 or 0303 123 1114 (Belfast based Office)

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Please be advised that NIAS replies under Freedom of Information may be released into the public domain via our website @ <http://www.niamb.co.uk>. Personal details in respect of your request will have, where applicable, been removed to protect confidentiality.

Yours sincerely

(not signed – issued by email)

**Information Governance
Team**