



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



What Tasks Can Lone Workers Perform Safety Message

Over the course of my career in the utility industry, I've often been asked what tasks lone workers are allowed to perform on their own. It's sometimes a hotly debated topic – both legally and ethically – and the answer is very much based on the employer. Each employer determines which tasks are allowed to be performed by lone workers in the field based on the workers' job classifications and safety considerations.

Typically, OSHA does not regulate the number of employees required for specific tasks – except for the tasks found at 29 CFR 1910.269(l)(2), “At least two employees,” which reads as follows.

Except as provided in paragraph (l)(2)(ii) of this section, at least two employees shall be present while any employees perform the following types of work:

Installation, removal, or repair of lines energized at more than 600 volts,

Installation, removal, or repair of deenergized lines if an employee is exposed to contact with other parts energized at more than 600 volts,

Installation, removal, or repair of equipment, such as transformers, capacitors, and regulators, if an employee is exposed to contact with parts energized at more than 600 volts,

Work involving the use of mechanical equipment, other than insulated aerial lifts, near parts energized at more than 600 volts, and

Other work that exposes an employee to electrical hazards greater than, or equal to, the electrical hazards posed by operations listed specifically in paragraphs (l)(2)(i)(A) through (l)(2)(i)(D) of this section.

OSHA does specifically allow some tasks to be performed by lone workers, including the following found at 1910.269(l)(2)(ii).

Routine circuit switching, when the employer can demonstrate that conditions at the site allow safe performance of this work,

Work performed with live-line tools when the position of the employee is such that he or she is neither within reach of, nor otherwise exposed to contact with, energized parts, and

Emergency repairs to the extent necessary to safeguard the general public.