



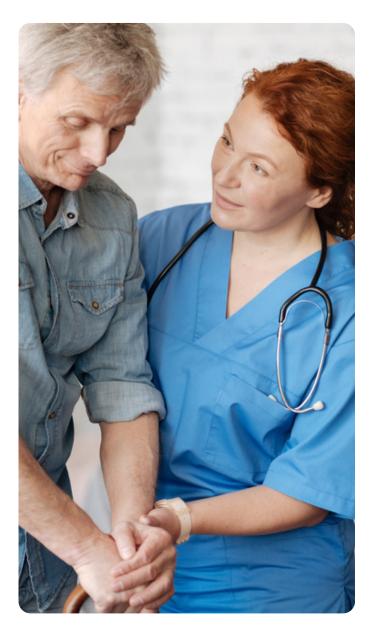
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Are You Doing Enough to Keep Lone Workers Safe

It is estimated there are now 53 million lone workers in Canada, the United States, and Europe combined, representing about 15 percent of the overall workforce.¹ And IDC reports that approximately 1.3 billion people are mobile workers, many of whom work alone continuously or at various times throughout their workday.²



Contractors, field workers, home health care nurses, social workers, realtors, property managers, and fleet drivers are just a few examples of lone workers—individuals who work by themselves without close or direct supervision—and they're a steadily growing part of the global workforce.

But the rise of lone workers poses new challenges for organizations that must keep their people safe, no matter where or how they work. After all, working alone brings with it unique safety and security risks. How can an organization that employs lone workers provide a safe workplace environment and protect these workers—many of whom face dangerous hazards or might have poor access to communication channels in emergency situations?

Implementing an effective lone worker safety program can help organizations promote a strong safety culture, keep all their employees safe, and protect their business from costly legal action. In this eBook, we'll provide practical, step-by-step guidance businesses with lone workers can use to put in place the right systems, processes, and policies to ensure lone worker health, safety, and security.

The Purpose of a Lone Worker Safety Program

An employer has a legal and moral responsibility—also known as a duty of care—to protect its employees from unnecessary risk of harm when working on its behalf, and that includes lone workers. A lone worker safety program, although itself not a legal requirement, can help companies effectively fulfill this obligation. By outlining the potential risks of working alone, along with best-practice procedures for preparing for and responding to critical situations, a written lone worker safety plan can help companies protect their employees—and themselves—from unnecessary safety and legal risks.

Aside from the legal implications, putting employees first—especially when it comes to their health, safety, and well-being—is simply good for business. It ensures business continuity, maintains employee morale, and supports employee loyalty and retention. Employees who can see their employer taking proactive measures to keep them safe are more motivated and productive than those that feel like they are simply being treated like a commodity. It's why companies that have exemplary safety, health, and environmental programs outperform the S&P 500 by between 3 and 5 percent.³

Robust lone worker safety policies and procedures can also positively impact recruitment. Such has been the case with CentraCare, a large not-for-profit health care system in Central Minnesota that employs home health care workers. CentraCare's hiring manager revealed that during the interview process, prospective candidates often ask how the organization will help protect their safety while in the field. By implementing and being able to speak to the numerous safety policies, procedures, and systems that have been put in place to protect lone worker safety, CentraCare has positioned itself as an employer of choice in the region—a huge competitive advantage given the growing nursing shortage.



Exploring Duty of Care

In a nutshell, duty of care means your company has the responsibility to protect employees from unnecessary risk of harm when working or traveling on your behalf.

Check out this eBook for more insights into how employers can effectively fulfill their duty of care responsibility and find out what every company must do to protect their employees—and themselves—from needless safety and legal risks.



Does Your Business Really Need a Lone Worker Safety Program?

Any organization that employs lone workers should have an established lone worker safety program in place, yet many are falling short. Why? Most companies simply don't realize the staggering number of lone workers they actually have.

It is a common misperception that lone workers perform their job duties exclusively alone in isolated locations or away from the public. But a lone worker could be a sales rep that works primarily in the office and occasionally visits clients, or a member of the corporate marketing team that might be required to travel alone to set up for events and trade shows. And the reality is—particularly given the rise in popularity of telecommuting—most employees today actually do work alone at least part of the time. According to one recent study, 70 percent of professionals work remotely at least one day a week, while 53 percent work remotely for at least half of the week.⁴

As you consider the lone workers your company employs, it's important to remember there are many different types of lone workers. While this list isn't exhaustive—and will vary by company and industry—an employee may be considered a lone worker if they:

- Travel away from the office to interact with customers
 (e.g. home health care aids, social service workers, real
 estate agents, property managers, home installation
 and field service technicians, delivery drivers, sales and
 marketing reps)
- Work alone but don't interact with customers
 (e.g. transportation workers, postal workers, factory or warehouse employees, remote office workers)
- Work alone outside of normal business hours (e.g., cleaners, security guards, gas station attendants, taxi drivers, hotel and hospitality workers)
- Perform hazardous work alone
 (e.g. utility workers, oil and gas field technicians, engineers, construction workers)

From slip and fall injuries and threats of violence to biohazards and traffic accidents, the unique health and safety risks faced by individuals working alone are very real. In home health care, for example, as many as 61 percent of home care nurses have experienced some form of workplace violence, while approximately 30 percent have reported being sexually harassed on the job.⁵

If your company has employees that work independently, a comprehensive lone worker safety program is critical to keeping them safe from potentially dangerous situations. And since the hazards faced by employees working alone can vary greatly by location, occupation, and industry, beginning with a personalized risk assessment is vital to guiding the development of your lone worker policies and procedures.

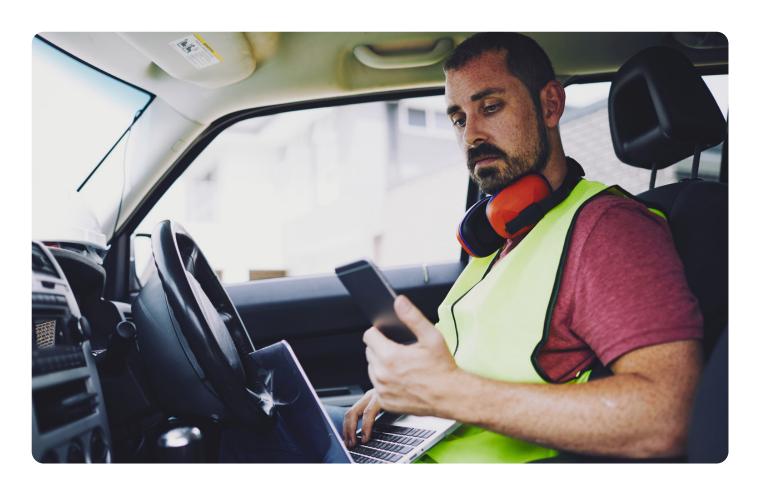
Conducting a Risk Assessment

Here is a simple 4-step process for conducting a workplace risk assessment to help you ensure the safety of your lone workers:

1 IDENTIFY ALL POTENTIAL HAZARDS

It's important to begin with a thorough understanding of the wide variety of hazards your lone workers may face. Working alone—often while performing high-risk duties or in isolated locations—naturally makes individuals more vulnerable to hazards like accidents, acts of violence, theft, driving-related incidents, dangerous substances or environments, and fatigue.

There are a few different ways you can gain insight into the specific risks your lone workers face. Involve your workforce, including front-line lone workers and their supervisors, by engaging them in small focus groups and gathering feedback through surveys. Observe lone workers in their environment by shadowing them for a day. Analyze historical health and safety data—for both your company and the industry you operate in—to identify any patterns and specific areas of concern. Each of these methods will provide you with a unique perspective into the hazards lone workers face, informing your risk assessment and guiding your policies.





2 DETERMINE WHO IS AT RISK

Once you've identified all the potential hazards, the next step is to determine who specifically these hazards put at risk. This includes assessing the risks to your entire workforce: full-time, part-time, contract, seasonal, and temporary employees.

To do this, review the day-to-day tasks, responsibilities, and routines of all lone workers within your organization, across all locations. While the lone worker employed in a warehouse may be at higher risk of injury from a slip-and-fall accident, an employee that frequently travels alone to visit clients might be more susceptible to theft or driving-related accidents.

3 ANALYZE IMPACT AND DETERMINE CONTROL MEASURES

After identifying the hazards and who might be harmed by them, you can then assess the potential impact and likelihood of risk in order to determine the specific control measures you should take.

For each hazard, list all of the possible precautions and control measures you could take and then evaluate the costs and benefits of each. This will help you determine if you can control or eliminate the associated risks and, if so, how. From those options, you can then determine the best course of action for your organization.

4 RECORD AND REGULARLY REVIEW FINDINGS

To protect your company from legal implications and fulfill your duty of care, it's important to document the steps you have taken to conduct a thorough risk assessment and protect the health and safety of your employees. But don't just file it away and forget about it!

Workplace risks and hazards are constantly evolving, in large part due to the dynamic nature of the world we operate in and the changing demands being placed upon employees. If an organization with lone field workers expands to serve new geographical markets which happen to fall within high-crime areas, it should review and update its risk assessment to account for these new potential hazards. And a California-based organization that opens up an office location in snowy New England might need to consider new weather-related risks and hazards. When to reexamine your lone worker risk assessment is unique to each organization, but the point is that it should be an evolving document that is routinely reviewed and updated.

How to Create an Effective Safety Program

With the risk assessment in hand, it's time to turn your attention to developing and implementing your lone worker safety program. And since the lone worker risk assessment is the foundation of your program's policies and procedures, start by helping employees understand all of the unique hazards they may encounter when working alone, tailoring it to your people's current work environment and behaviors.

Lone workers often work in high-risk situations—going into people's homes, working in confined spaces or at heights, leaving the office late at night, and working with hazardous substances and materials—but many may not necessarily realize the wide extent of potential risks and hazards they face. Once the risks have been identified, your lone worker safety plan should lay out your organization's rules and guidelines for working alone, offering practical instruction on what lone workers, their supervisors, and the organization should do to keep everybody safe and minimize risks.

And while development of the written plan should be led by the person or team within your organization that has overall responsibility for employee safety, it's a good idea to assemble a cross-functional and cross-regional team that will work together to create and manage it. By involving key stakeholders—such as HR representatives, health and safety managers, lone workers, and those who supervise lone workers—you can ensure nothing important is overlooked, confirm all processes and procedures make practical sense, and steadily build buy-in for the new safety program.



What to Include in the Written Safety Plan

Since a lone worker safety plan is meant to be a hands-on resource employees can use to guide their daily choices and actions, it's imperative that it is written in an accessible and straightforward style. And while a concise, focused, easy-to-read document is key to driving comprehension and adoption, there are a few topics your plan should specifically address.

Here are seven key points to highlight in your organization's lone worker safety plan:

1 PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

If employees don't understand the rationale behind your lone worker safety program and the actions they are asked to take as a result of it, they probably aren't going to adopt it. To be truly effective, employees must understand why lone worker policies and guidelines are needed. Getting everybody onboard with the "why" of your program not only improves compliance, but can also boost employee morale.

Introduce your lone worker safety plan by explaining the purpose of the program and its underlying policies. And rather than focusing on the benefits to the company—for example, reduced legal risks—focus instead on the benefits to employees: improved health, safety, well-being, and peace of mind.

2 RISKS OF WORKING ALONE

Using the risk assessment you conducted, outline all of the potential hazards your organization's lone workers may face and how employees should respond to each. Be as specific as you can, listing the general risks of working alone, as well as the risks that are unique to lone workers in specific job functions, roles, and locations. By helping employees understand all of the risks of the job—and the actions they should take if they encounter them—you can more effectively prepare and protect employees from harm.

3 LONE WORKER DEFINITIONS

There are many different types of lone workers, from those who occasionally travel for business independently to those who work alone full-time in dangerous or isolated locations. Be clear on the many ways your organization defines lone workers so employees understand when and how the policies outlined apply to them.

4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A lone worker safety plan is meant to provide employees with practical guidance on how they can safely work alone given the hazards of the job, so it's important that both employees and their supervisors understand their roles and responsibilities when it comes to ensuring a safe work environment.

Your plan should outline the specific responsibilities of the employee, their supervisor, and the organization in a clear, concrete way. Employees, for example, have a responsibility to not put themselves in situations where they are exposed to unnecessary risk of harm, while their managers should be regularly reviewing lone workers' risk assessments to determine if any changes are needed.



5 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

In addition to defining the roles and responsibilities of lone workers and their supervisors, it's vitally important to detail your company's hazard and incident reporting guidelines. This helps reduce the organization's legal risks, ensures the reporting employee has an avenue to get the support they need, and provides critical insight the organization needs to reduce or eliminate the risk of such an incident happening again.

Everybody should understand what types of incidents should be reported, when and to whom they should be reported, and who is responsible for reporting them. You should also provide detailed information on how incidents are to be reported, whether it means notifying a specific individual or logging an incident via a formal, online portal.

6 SAFETY STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

In your plan, make sure to clearly define what lone workers must do to protect their health and safety—such as log events or carry specific safety equipment with them—and the minimum standards of behavior expected of them.

Lone workers, for example, may be required to complete mandatory training on how to administer first aid to themselves in the event of an accident or how to de-escalate violent, high-conflict situations. Or if performing hazardous work, lone workers might be instructed to wear or carry specific protective equipment at all times.

7 RESOURCES AVAILABLE

For lone workers—particularly those that exclusively work away from colleagues—just finding out who to contact for what can be a challenge. Summarizing the help and support available to lone workers—and who within the organization they should contact with any questions or concerns—can help employees feel more protected at work while also improving program effectiveness and compliance.

Aside from providing critical contact information, you should also outline the programs and tools—such as training courses, safety equipment, and communication systems—available to lone workers to prepare and protect themselves from the hazards of working alone. With the many technological advancements in recent years, many organizations are also now utilizing robust lone worker safety solutions to further enhance the safety of lone workers in the field.

Investing in Lone Worker Safety Technology

With the help of technology, even employees who work alone are never truly on their own just because their job requires them to be away from the security of an office. Increasingly, organizations of all sizes are turning to lone worker safety solutions to improve employee safety, security, and peace of mind.

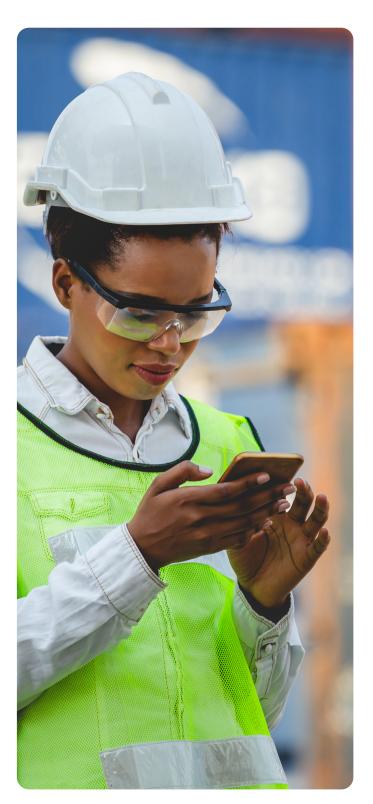
The use of lone worker safety technology has grown at a rapid pace as a result of the many shortcomings of traditional communication channels for lone workers in emergency situations. Even if a lone worker is carrying their mobile phone, for example, they may not be able to use it if they are incapacitated or without cell coverage. And even if they are able to use it, they may not be able to accurately relay exactly where they are, even if an address is known. Additionally, sometimes a high-conflict situation can't be defused.

Since aggressive individuals usually don't respond well to obvious attempts to contact help, it's important for lone workers to have a way to signal for help without angering their attacker any further.

All lone workers should have some sort of personal alarm system. There are many of these on the market, ranging from low-tech panic buttons to more complete lone worker safety applications. A robust mobile application, combined with an expert monitoring team, can most effectively track and protect workers in the field by detecting a lone worker's location on a map, quickly dispatching local authorities to their location during an emergency. Some apps don't even require the push of a button, making them extraordinarily easy to use when adrenaline is high and panic sets in.



What to Look for in a Lone Worker Safety System



The right technology can make lone workers feel safe, empowered, and able to do their jobs knowing that they are protected by their employers. But since modern communication systems and devices are constantly evolving, it's important to do your homework and find the solution that will best fit your lone workers' needs.

When evaluating lone worker safety systems, here are a few questions to consider:

Does it address the lone worker risks you've identified?

First and foremost, you need to determine whether the system you are evaluating sufficiently addresses all of the lone worker hazards you've identified.

Otherwise, what's the point? Take out your initial risk assessment and go through each potential hazard one by one to ensure your system has the capabilities needed to mitigate or eliminate the resulting risks.

Unfortunately, some solutions have been on the market for a very long time—often without many updates. Many systems just aren't built for a mobile-first world and lack the functionality needed to effectively safeguard and communicate with lone workers. And since lone worker risks are constantly evolving, it's important to keep in mind that you don't want a system you will grow out of. Instead, look for a flexible, scalable system that you can grow with—one that the vendor is also continually innovating and improving on—to get the best bang for your buck.

Does the solution include 24/7/365 expert monitoring with a direct connection to law enforcement?

In many emergency situations, a system that merely notifies a lone worker's peers or supervisor that help is needed is too little, too late. Every second counts, so your people need a direct connection to and response from law enforcement. When your workers find themselves in danger and trigger their personal alarm, there is no telling what situation they are in. They could be under attack, on the run, or being pressured to stay silent. In such cases, dialing 911 may also not be an easy option. Even if they can call the police, they are unlikely to be composed enough to quickly and effectively relay relevant information to the operator. For these reasons, it's important to look for a 24-hour emergency monitoring solution with a direct connection to law enforcement. By combining a mobile app with an expert monitoring team protecting your people in the field, when your lone workers signal they are in danger they do not have to worry about contacting the authorities—a monitoring professional is doing so already.

Will it require lone workers to change their behavior, or can it be easily integrated into their current workflow?

Changing the behaviors and habits of others is hard—especially when it comes to lone workers who might be used to creating their own rules and working with minimal supervision. If your lone worker safety system asks too much of employees—requiring them to significantly alter their daily processes, practices, and timelines—your system is doomed to fail before it's even been implemented. The system you choose should be effortless for lone workers to use and not hamper performance in any way: this means it must be intuitive, easy to use, and require minimal training.



Does it require workers to carry extensive or specialized equipment?

Many lone workers have to work with specialized equipment; others don't use any at all. How will this device fit into your workers' toolkit? If they are already overburdened with equipment, certain types of devices might not be feasible. On the other hand, if your lone workers aren't used to bringing along specialized equipment, they might be resistant to using a new device. Some of the most feature-rich solutions available only require a smartphone, which can solve both of these problems. And, rather than having to remember to charge a separate device and bring it with them, lone workers can simply use their cell phones—something they almost certainly won't forget.

How does a lone worker initiate a request for help?

In an emergency, seconds count and workers may not have the time or ability to dial 911. An individual might be incapacitated or unable to speak with a 911 operator, so it's important to select a system that doesn't require fine motor skills to request help. Look for a solution that is simple to use and only requires a single push of a button. Some solutions offer a timer function which will send help to the user's location when the timer expires. When the button is pushed or the timer expires, an expert monitoring team receives a distress signal—along with pre-inputted personal information, such as clothing building number, and/or car description—and can immediately dispatch local law enforcement to the user's precise location.

Does it offer a visible and audible deterrent?

A visible deterrent is a powerful way to prevent would-be threats. It shows aggressors that someone is actively monitoring the lone worker, who is just one tether or headphone pull away from immediate assistance. And if a threat does arise, a loud alarm notifying anyone in the area that law enforcement is being summoned is often enough to scare off an attacker and de-escalate a situation.

Choosing the Right Lone Worker Safety System

While nearly half of organizations use some form of emergency management software to reach their employees during critical events, not all systems are created equal. And with so many platforms to choose from, it can be tough to compare vendors and narrow down your options.

Read this article for tips on how you can navigate the emergency communication software buying process with ease!



Tips for Successful Adoption

How you communicate new employee programs and policies is important, and clear, consistent communication is key to building buy-in. While involving key stakeholders in the process from the very beginning—starting with the risk assessment and development of the written safety plan—will improve compliance, there are a few steps you should take when you're preparing to launch your lone worker safety program that will ensure a smoother rollout.

Simply sending out a blanket email to employees instructing them to read and follow the new lone worker policies and procedures is not enough. The average office worker today receives more than 122 emails on a daily basis, 6 making it likely that your email will be missed, ignored, or treated as spam. And, without any context behind the purpose of the new program and its importance, adoption will suffer.



Here are a few things you can do to drive adoption of your lone worker safety program:

- Assign a leader—perhaps an HR representative or health and safety manager—who will maintain and enforce the program's policies, and act as the point person for any questions related to them.
- Introduce the new program to all lone worker supervisors first, followed by all employees—either in-person or via conference call.
- Promote the program with regular webinars and training sessions. Good technology partners will provide you with materials such as training videos to help with adoption.
- Reinforce your company's stance on lone worker safety with the seat belt analogy: just as you wouldn't drive without a seatbelt, don't work alone without the proper tools and training.
- Add lone worker safety program training to your onboarding process to convey to new hires your company's rules and guidelines for working alone.
- Send out regular reminders on the program and provide annual refresher training to help keep lone worker safety policies top of mind.

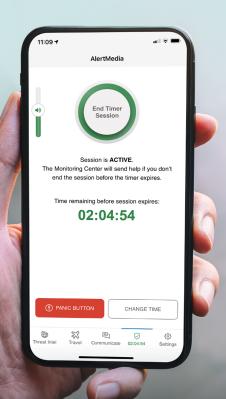
Real World Tip!

To help facilitate adoption, be sure to choose a system with reporting capabilities so you can easily track usage, share that data to supervisors, and have candid conversations about why workers may not be using the system.

We use AlertMedia's lone worker monitoring solution to keep our property managers safe while in the field. We leverage its built-in reporting capabilities—pulling reports to compare employees' usage to the tours done each week—to ensure compliance and that everyone is protected at all times while working alone. This has improved employee safety, security confidence, and peace of mind—while also helping us maximize end-user adoption and prove the business value of our technology investment."

Mindy Helms, Director of HR at Marquette Management

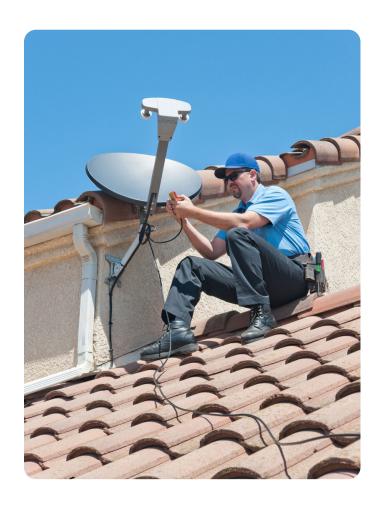




Maximizing Protection for Lone Workers

Too many organizations unfortunately still wait until it's too late and an incident occurs before taking the time to develop and implement a formal lone worker safety program. But as a company that employs lone workers, your people are counting on you to ensure their work environment is safe and their job does not put them in harm's way.

Given the many dangers of working alone, lone worker safety must be a top priority for every organization. Educating and guiding employees on how to safely work alone—and investing in lone worker safety solutions that enhance protection of employees in the field—keeps your people safe from unnecessary harm and delivers a host of business benefits. By demonstrating your organization's ongoing commitment to employee health and safety, you can boost morale, improve performance, reduce turnover, avoid legal risks, and recruit more qualified candidates. With a robust lone worker safety program supported by technology, even employees who work alone are never truly on their own.





Keep Your Lone Workers Safe In The Field

Give your distributed workforce a faster, reliable way to signal for help from your team or law enforcement.

AlertMedia helps you protect your most vulnerable people while they are isolated or in higher-risk situations. We provide the most comprehensive solution for employee safety—combining powerful mass notification capabilities with the support of a 24/7 monitoring team and direct connection to law enforcement through our safety monitoring app.





One-Touch Distress Signal

Arm employees with a reliable, discreet panic button on their mobile phones that alerts our 24/7 monitoring team to send help to their exact location.



Timed Monitoring Sessions

Automatically receive alerts while simultaneously notifying law enforcement if employees are unable to confirm their safety before their timed session expires.



Customized Action Plans

Work with your dedicated success manager to develop response workflows for our monitoring team to follow, including alerts to your safety teams or escalation to law enforcement.



24/7/365 Monitoring Team

Ensure a rapid response to safety incidents around the clock with the support of a highly-trained monitoring team that works with responders to get employees help faster.

Trusted By Thousands of Leading Organizations

We serve customers across all industries, including local municipalities, healthcare, non-profits, manufacturing, energy and utilities, and more.





























Footnotes

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