What to check before buying wearable lone worker alarms in New Zealand

Buying a lone worker alarm is less about finding the smallest device and more about matching the alarm to real working conditions. A two way voice alarm can give a worker a way to call for help and speak with an alert recipient, but the value depends on clear audio, reliable alert paths, sensible location support and a workplace policy people can follow.

New Zealand worksites vary widely. A person may be in a rural paddock, a warehouse aisle, a basement plant room or a late-night retail shift. Each setting changes how an alarm is carried, how it is heard, and how quickly someone can respond. The points below keep the purchase decision grounded in those everyday details.

Start with the work, not the device

Before comparing models, set out where lone work happens and what can go wrong there. A worker moving around a large site needs different support from someone stationary at a desk or counter. Think about noise levels, weather, distance from other people, phone coverage and whether the task involves machinery, heights, confined spaces or contact with the public.

The alarm should fit the risk, not the other way around. If the main concern is a fall, fall detection matters. If the concern is a confrontation or a medical emergency, quick access to SOS and voice communication may matter more. If staff regularly move between buildings, location support becomes more useful. A short written assessment helps keep later choices honest.

Points to check before choosing

- **How the SOS alert is activated.** Check that the action is easy to learn and possible in the conditions where it may be needed. A button that works well at a desk may be awkward with gloves, in darkness or during a fall.
- **Quality of two way voice communication.** An alarm that opens a voice channel is only useful if speech is clear. Ask how the device handles speaker volume, microphone pickup and background noise, especially on busy sites or in windy outdoor areas.
- **Location support that suits the site.** GPS can help outdoors, while WiFi positioning and GSM triangulation may assist in other settings. Coverage is rarely perfect in every place, so consider where location is likely to be accurate and where it may be less precise.

- **Battery life against the full shift.** Look beyond a headline figure. Check how the device behaves with regular voice use, repeated alerts and days away from charging. Battery life should match rosters, travel time and any on-call expectations.
- **Man down and fall detection behaviour.** These features can provide an alert when a worker cannot press SOS. Check what triggers them, what happens after a trigger, and whether false alerts can be cancelled without confusing the worker.

Check what happens after an alert

An alarm is part of a response chain. The device sends an alert, someone receives it, and a planned response follows. If any link is vague, the technology creates reassurance without much practical benefit.



Ask who the alert recipient is at each time of day. A single named person may cover a small team, but shifts, leave and after-hours work need a clearer arrangement. The recipient needs to know what information comes with the alert, how to make contact by voice, when to escalate, and what records should be kept afterwards.

Voice communication deserves particular attention. A two way voice alarm may allow the recipient to speak with the worker, confirm what is happening and gather details while help is arranged. That can be more useful than a silent alert, but it also depends on the worker being able to answer. A clear protocol for unanswered calls is just as important as the call itself.

Think about wearing and carrying the device

A lone worker alarm that stays in a bag or vehicle is not much use during an incident. The wearable format should suit clothing, PPE and the way the person moves through the day. A clip may work on a shirt pocket but fail on a high-visibility vest. A lanyard may be easy to reach but unsuitable around machinery. A belt-mounted device may sit under a jacket or brace against equipment.

Comfort matters because it affects routine. If the device is bulky, noisy or awkward to reach, workers may remove it. Try to picture the full shift: arrivals, breaks, travel between areas, interactions with others and the end of the day. The best device is one that can be worn without constant adjustment.

For teams using loneworkeralarms.co.nz as part of their research, the same practical questions still apply: how the alarm is worn, how alerts are received and whether the features match the work being done.

Look closely at location limits

Location information can help an alert recipient respond, but it should not be treated as magic. GPS generally works best with a clear view of the sky. Indoors, underground or among tall structures, results can be slower or less precise. WiFi positioning can help in built-up areas where suitable networks are available. GSM triangulation can provide a broader area estimate when more accurate methods are unavailable.

The useful question is not whether a device mentions location, but what the worker and responder can expect in the places that matter. A broad area estimate may still help if it narrows a search. A misleadingly precise marker can waste time. Where location is weak, the response plan should rely more on voice contact, known work schedules and check-in routines.



Check testing and everyday reliability

Device testing should be simple enough to become routine. A test confirms that the SOS function, voice channel, charging routine and alert recipient arrangements still work. It also gives workers confidence that pressing the button is not a theoretical exercise.

Testing should reflect normal conditions without creating new risk. For example, a voice check can be done from a safe work area at normal volume. If a task involves a hazardous environment, do not create a hazardous situation to test an alarm. Any issue involving fixed machinery, electrical systems, gas systems or other controlled equipment belongs with a qualified professional rather than an improvised field fix.

Keep records of tests in the same way other safety checks are recorded. Note the date, the people involved, what was checked and any follow-up needed. This does not need to be elaborate. A short log helps reveal patterns, such as a device that often misses a voice connection in one area or a charger that is not being used consistently.

Match the alarm to the workplace policy

A workplace policy turns individual devices into a shared system. It should say when lone work is allowed, what alarm must be carried, how checks are made, who receives alerts and what happens when a device is unavailable or flat. It should also explain what workers do if they feel unsafe and want to stop a task.

Training should be short, practical and repeated when roles or equipment change. Workers need to know how to activate SOS, how to answer a voice call, how to cancel a false alert and what to do if they cannot speak. Managers and alert recipients need their own training, because receiving an alert calmly is a skill too.

There is also a privacy and trust angle. A device that can support location and voice communication should be covered by clear rules about when it is used, who can access information and how records are handled. Clear boundaries make it easier for workers to accept the device as a safety tool.

Compare trade-offs before committing

No single alarm suits every task. More features can mean more setup, more training and more decisions during an emergency. Fewer features may be easier to use but leave gaps if the work changes. The right balance comes from the work itself.



A small retail team may value simple SOS, dependable voice communication and a clear after-hours recipient. A remote maintenance worker may need GPS, long battery life and a device that can be heard or reached in noisy surroundings. A care worker moving between homes may place more weight on quick activation, voice contact and a workable response plan when location details are limited.

When reviewing options, keep the final decision tied to observable checks: can the worker reach the control quickly, can the recipient hear and respond, does the battery cover the shift,

does the device stay on the person, and does the alert process make sense at every hour of operation? Those questions reveal more than a long feature list.

Sites such as loneworkeralarms.co.nz describe wearable lone worker alarms for New Zealand workplaces with SOS, GPS, two way voice, man down and fall detection alerts. Use that kind of product information as a starting point, then test it against the risks, routines and response arrangements in the workplace. A well-chosen alarm should make it easier to ask for help and easier for someone to respond with useful information.