



Protecting Your Workforce During The Coronavirus (COVID-19)



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Introduction

We are going through exceptional circumstances and we must all always comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Residential and Commercial properties operating during this pandemic need to ensure they are protecting their workforce and minimising the risk of spread of infection.

The aim of this guide is to outline suggested measures for properties of all types and sizes, in line with Public Health England guidance.

The Guidance

PHE guidance for all properties states “where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full in relation to a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the property to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission”.

The health and safety requirements of any activity must not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely, it should not take place.

Emergency services are also under great pressure and may not be able to respond as quickly as usual. This should be taken into consideration in the planning of work activities, first aid, fire and emergency responses.

Organisations must have in place effective arrangements for monitoring and reviewing their compliance with Government and industry guidance. Properties should also remind the workforce at every opportunity of the Operating Procedures which are aimed at protecting them, their colleagues, families and the wider population.

Travelling to Work: When & How

When to Travel

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy advised in a letter to the UK construction industry on 31 March 2020:

“that wherever possible, people should work at home. However, we know that for many people working in construction their job requires them to travel to their place of work, and they can continue to do so. This is consistent with the Chief Medical Officer’s advice”.

It is important to understand the following guidelines by which employees should or should not travel to work as outlined below.

Social Distancing

Employees in the commercial and residential management sectors should follow the guidance on staying at home and social distancing. Where this is not possible, they must follow social distancing principles at all times.

Self-isolation

Anyone with a high temperature or a new persistent cough or is within 14 days of the day when the first member of their household showed symptoms of Coronavirus should not come to the property.

Those At Increased Risk

Anyone who is at increased risk of severe illness from Coronavirus should work from home and should be particularly stringent about following social distancing measures.

Those Defined As Vulnerable

Anyone identified as extremely vulnerable will be advised by their health authority and must follow the guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable people.

Anyone living with a person in one of the above groups should also follow guidance on social distancing.

If Someone Falls Ill

If a worker develops a high temperature or a persistent cough while at work, they should:

- Ensure their manager is informed
- Return home immediately
- Avoid touching anything
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin

They must then follow the guidance on self-isolation and not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed.

How to Travel

Where possible, employees should travel to properties alone using their own transport. If this is not possible and they have to share transport:

- Journeys should be shared with the same individuals and with as few people as possible
- Good ventilation and facing away from each other may help to reduce the risk of transmission
- The vehicle should be cleaned regularly using gloves and standard cleaning products, with emphasis on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces

Properties should consider:

- Parking arrangements for additional vehicles
- Other means of transport to avoid public transport
- Providing hand cleaning facilities at entrances and exits. This should be soap and water wherever possible or otherwise hand sanitiser
- How someone taken ill would get home
- When public transport is the only option, consider:
 - Changing and staggering hours to reduce congestion on public transport
 - Avoid travelling during peak times

Driving at Work

When travelling at work or between properties, employees should travel alone. If employees have no option but to share a vehicle, they should:

- Share with the same individuals and with as few people as possible
- Where possible maintain a distance of two metres and avoid touching faces
- Maintain good ventilation and face away from each other if possible
- Wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water (or hand sanitiser if not available) before and after the journey
- Regularly clean the vehicle using gloves and standard cleaning products, with particular emphasis on handles and other surfaces which may be touched during the journey

Access & Egress

Points Considerations

- Stop all non-essential visitors
- Consider introducing staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact
- Plan property access and egress points to enable social distancing
- Allow space between people waiting to enter the property
- Use signage, for example, floor markings to ensure social distancing is maintained
- Remove or disable entry systems that require skin contact (e.g. fingerprint scanners)
- Require thorough handwashing when entering and leaving the property
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces
- Where loading and offloading arrangements will allow it, drivers should remain in their vehicles. If this isn't possible, they should wash or sanitise their hands before handling any materials
- Consider arrangements for monitoring compliance

Hand Washing

- Allow regular breaks to wash hands
- Provide additional hand washing facilities to the usual welfare facilities, particularly on a large spread out properties or where there are significant numbers of personnel at the property
- Ensure adequate supplies of soap and fresh water are readily available and kept topped up at all times
- Provide hand sanitiser (minimum 60% alcohol based) where hand washing facilities are unavailable
- Regularly clean the hand washing facilities
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Toilet Facilities

- Restrict the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time and use signage, such as floor markings, to ensure social distancing is maintained
- Wash or sanitise hands before and after using the facilities
- Enhance the cleaning regimes for toilet facilities, particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush
- Portable toilets should be avoided wherever possible, but where in use these should be cleaned and emptied more frequently
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Canteens & Rest Areas

Where possible, employees should be encouraged to bring their own food. They should also be required to stay at the property once they have entered it and avoid using local shops.

Where there are no practical alternatives, workplace canteens could remain open to provide food to staff with appropriate adjustments for social distancing. Canteens should provide a takeaway service providing pre-prepared and wrapped food only.

- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available at the property if possible
- The capacity of each canteen or rest area should be clearly identified
- Break times should be staggered to reduce congestion and contact
- Drinking water should be provided with enhanced cleaning measures of the tap mechanism
- Frequently clean surfaces that are touched regularly, using standard cleaning products
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance
- Social distancing should be maintained, including in rest areas for canteen staff
- All rubbish should be put straight in the bin and not left for someone else to clear up
- Tables should be cleaned between each use
- Crockery, eating utensils, cups etc. should not be used unless they are disposable or are washed and dried between use
- Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible
- Canteen staff should wash their hands often before and after handling food
- Consider arrangements for monitoring compliance.

Changing Facilities & Shower Rooms

- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available at the property if possible
- Based on the size of a facility, determine how many people can use it at any one time to maintain social distancing guidelines
- Restrict the number of people using these facilities at any one time e.g. use a welfare attendant
- Introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins in these areas with regular removal and disposal.

Planning to Avoid Close Working

In line with Public Health England guidelines, where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the property to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission.

Working at properties needs to be planned and organised to avoid crowding and minimise the risk of spread of infection by following PHE and HSE guidance and the advice within these Operating Procedures.

Properties should remind the workforce of the specific control measures necessary to protect them, their colleagues, families and the UK population.

Hierarchy of Controls

If you are not able to work whilst maintaining a two-metre distance, you should consider whether the activity should continue and, if so, risk assess it using the hierarchy of controls below and against any sector-specific guidance.

Eliminate

- Those who are unwell with COVID-19 symptoms
- Rearrange tasks to enable them to be done by one person, or by maintaining social distancing
- Avoid skin to skin and face to face contact
- Stairs should be used in preference to lifts and consider one ways systems
- Property Meetings
 - Only absolutely necessary meeting participants should attend
 - Attendees should be at least two metres apart
 - Rooms should be well ventilated
 - Consider holding meetings in open areas where possible

Reduce (where social distancing cannot be applied)

- Minimise the frequency and time employees are within 2 metres of each other
- Minimise the number of employees involved in these tasks
- Employees should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face
- Lower the maximum capacity of lifts to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Regularly clean common touchpoints, doors, buttons, handles, tools, equipment etc.
- Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces
- Employees should wash their hands before and after using any equipment

Isolate

Keep groups of employees that have to work within 2 metres:

- Together in teams i.e. do not change employees within teams
- As small as possible
- Away from other employees where possible

Control

Where face to face working is essential to carry out a task when working within 2 metres:

- Keep this to 15 minutes or less where possible
- Consider introducing an enhanced authorisation process for these activities
- Provide additional supervision to monitor and manage compliance

PPE/RPE

Employees should not use RPE for Coronavirus where the two metre social distancing guidelines are met.

- Where it is not possible to maintain a two-metre distance, each activity should be risk assessed using the hierarchy of controls and against any sector-specific guidance, mindful that masks are the last resort in the hierarchy
- Re-usable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared
- Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused
- Where personnel are required to work in specific environments (e.g. where persons are shielding, with symptoms, or confirmed Coronavirus cases may be present) additional PPE should be considered specific to the Coronavirus risk

The measures necessary to minimise the risk of spread rely on everyone taking responsibility for their actions. An open and collaborative approach is key.

First Aid & Emergency Services

The primary responsibility is to preserve life and first aid should be administered if required and until the emergency services attend.

- When planning activities, the provision of adequate first aid resources must be agreed between the relevant parties at the property
- Emergency plans including contact details should be kept up to date
- Consideration must also be given to potential delays in emergency services response, due to the current pressure on resources
- Consider preventing or rescheduling high-risk work or providing additional competent first aid or trauma resources.

Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across the property, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- Taps and washing facilities
- Toilet flush and seats
- Door handles and push plates
- Handrails on staircases and corridors
- Lift controls
- Machinery and equipment controls
- All areas used for eating
- Telephone equipment
- Keyboards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.

You're in safe hands

Tetra Consulting provide independent safety risk consultancy and smart solutions to help you protect your most important assets: people, property and brand. Our mission is to support and educate you and your company in safety risk management and compliance by providing solutions informed by our knowledge and client insights.

If you want to learn more about anything in this guide, please drop us a quick email at info@tetraconsulting.co.uk





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