

P026 – CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)– PROTECTING OUR WORKFORCE

1. Introduction

Construction Sites / Sales Offices operating during the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic need to ensure they are protecting their workforce and minimising the risk of spread of infection. This includes considering how personnel travel to and from the workplace.

This guidance is intended to introduce consistent measures on sites of all types and sizes in line with the Government's recommendations on social distancing.

These are exceptional circumstances, and the industry must comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus at all times.

The health and safety requirements of any construction type activity must not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel being available or social distancing being implemented, it must not take place.

We are aware that emergency services are also under great pressure and may not be able to respond as quickly as usual.

Workplaces should remind the workforce before work commences every day and at all break times of the Site Operating Procedures which are aimed at protecting them, their colleagues, their families and the UK population.

If a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out below, it may be required to shut down. The HSE is the relevant enforcing authority for the guidelines. If a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out, they may be subject to enforcement action.

2. Potential Infection

2.1 Self-Isolation

Anyone who meet one of the following criteria should not come to the workplace:

- a) Has a High Temperature or New Persistent Cough, loss of taste or smell – follow the guidance on self-isolation.
- b) Is a vulnerable person (by virtue of their age, underlying health condition, clinical condition or are pregnant) you are to consult with your line manager and/or H&S Department to determine if a COVID-19 occupational health risk assessment referral is required.
- c) Is living with someone who is a vulnerable person you are to consult with your line manager and /or H&S Dept to determine if a COVID-19 occupational health risk assessment referral is required and identify any additional control measures that may be needed.

2.2 Procedure if Someone Falls Ill

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

- a) Return Home Immediately
- b) Avoid Touching Anything
- c) Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

They must then follow the guidance on self-isolation and report for a Covid19 test - not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed or on receipt of a negative test result.

3. Preventative Measures

3.1 Travel to the workplace

Wherever possible workers should travel to workplace alone using their own transport or transport provided by their employer. Sites are also to consider:

- a) Parking Arrangements for additional cars and bicycles, staggering start and finish times to accommodate increase in vehicles. Individual assessment required at access points to determine number of vehicles that can be parked safely.
- b) Individuals using their private vehicle for work purposes must ensure that they have business insurance in place.
- c) Use other means of transport to avoid public transport, eg Cycling.

3.2 Site Access

- a) Provide hand cleaning facilities at entrances and exits. This should be soap and water wherever possible or hand sanitiser if water is not available.
- b) Stop all non-essential visitors

- c) Implement additional signage to remind staff and visitors to act appropriately, for example wash hands and keep distance.
- d) Introduce staggered start and finish times, to reduce congestion and contact at all times.
- e) Monitor site access points to enable social distancing – you may need to change the number of access points, either increase to reduce congestion or decrease to enable monitoring.
- f) Remove or disable entry systems that require skin contact, eg Fingerprint Scanners
- g) Require all workers to wash or clean their hands before entering or leaving the site, eg using a bottle of hand sanitiser prior to commencing work (putting on gloves) and upon completion of work (removing gloves)
- h) Allow plenty of space (two metres) between people waiting to enter site.
- i) Every 4 hours clean all common contact surfaces in reception, offices, access control and delivery areas, eg Scanners, Copiers, Screens, Desks, particularly during peak flow times.
- j) Reduce number of people in attendance at site inductions and consider holding them outdoors where possible reducing the number to 5 people at a time and local Drugs and Alcohol Testing to be suspended.
- k) Drivers should remain in their vehicles if the load will allow it and must wash or clean their hands before unloading goods and materials.
- l) All operatives should be issued with a set of protective gloves
- m) Shift start times should be staggered to reduce buildup of numbers

3.3 Hand Washing

- a) Provide additional hand washing facilities to the usual welfare facilities if a large spread out site or significant numbers of personnel on site. If required Satellite Facilities should be provided so that site operatives do not have to return to the main site accommodation.
- b) Ensure that soap and fresh water is readily available and kept topped up, clean the hand washing facilities and check soap and sanitiser levels daily by the cleaners and site management.
- c) Provide hand sanitiser where hand washing facilities are unavailable but be aware that this is ineffective if hands are heavily soiled.
- d) Provide suitable and enough waste receptacles for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.
- a) Sites will need extra supplies of soap, hand sanitiser and paper towels and these should be securely stored.

3.4 Toilet Facilities

- a) Restrict the numbers of people using toilet facilities at any one time, e.g., use welfare attendant.
- b) Wash hands before and after using the facilities.
- c) Enhance with cleaning regimes for toilet facilities particularly door handles, locks and toilet flush.
- d) Portable toilets should be avoided wherever possible, but where in use these should be cleaned and emptied more frequently.
- e) Provide suitable and enough rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

3.5 Canteens and Eating Arrangements

With cafes and restaurants having been closed across the UK, canteens cannot always operate as normal. With food outlets closing and the need for social distancing individuals should bring their own food to work and avoid leaving site during the shift for food.

Whilst there is a requirement for construction sites to provide a means of heating food and making hot drinks, these are exceptional circumstances and where it is not possible to introduce a means of keeping equipment clean between use, kettles, microwaves, etc., must be removed from use.

- a) Dedicated eating areas should be identified on site (i.e., canteens) to reduce food and waste contamination.
- b) Break times should always be staggered to reduce congestion and contact
- c) Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance of any room where people eat and should be used by workers when entering and leaving the area.
- d) The workforce should be asked to bring pre-prepared meals and refillable drink bottles from home.
- e) Workers should site two metres apart from each other whilst eating and avoid all contact. Welfare units recommended limited to two people at any one time.
- f) Where catering is provided on site, it should provide pre-prepared and wrapped food only.
- g) Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible.
- h) Crockery, eating utensils, cups, etc., should be provided by the individual from home.
- i) Drinking water should be provided with enhanced cleaning measures of the tap mechanism introduced.
- j) Tables should be cleaned between each use.

- k) All waste should be put straight in the bin and not left for someone else to clear up.
- l) All areas used for eating must be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each break and shift, including chairs, door handles, vending machines and payment devices.
- m) Messing facilities should be constantly supervised to prevent the 'herding' instinct of humans; this is particularly prevalent during night shifts.

3.6 Changing Facilities, Showers and Drying Rooms

- a) Introduce staggered start and finish times, to reduce congestion and human contact.
- b) Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day
- c) Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available on site if possible.
- d) Based on the size of each facility, determine how many people can use it at any one time to maintain a distance of two metres.
- e) Provide suitable and sufficient waste receptacles in these area with regular removal and disposal.

4. Working Together

4.1 Avoiding Close Working

Works should be planned, where possible, to avoid working in close proximity. However, there will be occasions when work activity requires staff to work within 2m of each other. On these occasions additional safety precautions must be put in place as outlined in this document.

4.2 General Principles

- a) Face coverings must be worn at all times within internal areas and externally when there is the risk of coming into contact with another person i.e. walkways / compound.
- b) Standard PPE Gloves Glasses, etc. should continue to be utilised
- c) Physical work that requires close contact (less than two metres) between workers should be avoided where possible.
- d) Work requiring skin to skin contact should not be carried out
- e) Plan work to minimise contact between workers, where possible
- f) Re-usable PPE must not be shared among workers
- g) Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused
- h) Stairs should be used in preference to lifts or hoists
- i) Where lifts or hoists must be used:
 - i) Lower their capacity to reduce congestion and contact at all times
 - ii) Regularly clean touchpoints, doors, buttons, etc.

4.3 Working in Closer Proximity than 2 Metres

When working within two metres of another person to carry out a task, we must work through and be able to demonstrate all other reasonable options have been assessed as we would with any other site-based activity.

Following the health and safety hierarchy of controls in the first instance we should look to eliminate/remove the risk and therefore the need to carry out work within two metres of another person. If this is not possible, we must then aim to reduce the exposure to that risk by cutting down on exposure times as much as possible by reducing the amount of time working within two metres of another person.

We then need to consider if we can isolate those working within two metres of each other via the use of physical barriers or other similar methods to prevent aerosol's from directly contacting another person from a cough or a sneeze. Finally, we need to consider the use of additional PPE.

The recommended use of additional PPE to wear are:

- a) Face Mask FFP2 or Surgical masks are both suitable PPE – this is to prevent droplets from entering the mouth or nasal passage directly or prevent droplets from leaving the mouth from a cough or a sneeze
- b) Disposable Gloves ie Nitrile – Can be work overprotective gloves or in lieu of gloves depending on the task specific risk assessment.
- c) Protective Glasses.

When using this PPE training must be given on its use, removal and disposal. This training can take the form of a toolbox talk on how to wear, use and dispose of PPE.

4.4 Site Meetings

- a) Only participants that are necessary should attend
- b) Attendees should be two metres apart from each other
- c) Rooms should be well ventilated/windows opened to allow fresh air circulation
- d) Consider holding meetings in open areas where possible.

5. Cleaning

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

- a) Taps and Washing Facilities
- b) Toilet flush and seats
- c) Door Handles and Push Plates
- d) Lift and Hoist Controls
- e) Machinery and Equipment Controls
- f) Food Preparation and Eating Surfaces
- g) Telephone Equipment
- h) Keyboards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- i) Waste collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of the day

6. Project Team Interface

The site management team are responsible for implementing the Site Operating Procedures and monitoring compliance.

This will include:

- a) Planning each working shift with their supply chain and stakeholders to ensure efficient and effective co-ordination of all site activities in respect to this SOP, including the co-ordination of site facility use.
- b) Ensuring that there are suitable and sufficient hand washing facilities and materials.
- c) Ensuring that there is an adequate cleaning regime in place
- d) Where possible hold site meetings using teleconferencing, to avoid the need for the client, design team and other project stakeholders to come to site.
- e) Continue to carry out site inductions for each person who works on site – holding these in open air areas where possible to make compliance with 2m distancing easier to achieve.
- f) Keeping and controlling the stock of PPE
- g) Monitoring the general adherence to the General Principles set out in 4.2 of this document.
- h) Monitoring the adherence to the control measures for site operatives having to work within two metres of each other.
- i) To carry out COVID-19 Briefings and Toolbox Talks with all site operatives returning to site and entering site for first time – to set out the Site Operating Procedures and on how to protect themselves.
- j) To make adjustments to their site to achieve compliance with this SOP.
- k) To alert line manager and senior staff to any potential problems with compliance with this SOP.

7. Plant and Material Storage

- a) All site staff should use own pen or stylus to sign for accepting plant and material delivery.
- b) Site staff should ensure that delivery drivers comply with the general principles as set out in 4.2 of this document.
- c) All Storage Areas should have access to cleaning wipes and sanitisers to allow cleaning of hands and surfaces after each interaction with delivery personnel.
- d) Tools and equipment should be cleaned down after each use around common touch points
- e) Delivery drivers should be instructed to lay down delivery line or tablet to allow the site manager to sign. Area should then be cleaned down
- f) Signage should be displayed around the site compound to remind all operatives of the need to adhere to COVID-19 protection requirements.
- g) Operative entering plant or material storage should maintain 2m distance from other operatives and should refrain from touching item until it has been delivered to their work area or is their direct possession (with no other operative to have access or use)
- h) Social distancing must be in practice for all deliveries. Where this cannot be achieved delivery should be rejected.
- i) Delivery drivers should stay within vehicle if possible to allow the truck to be unloaded.
- j) Delivered packages should be sprayed with disinfectant where possible before onward distribution.
- k) Distribution of materials and tools to site operatives should be undertaken with compliance to social distancing, floor markings etc should be in place to support this.