Safe working during the COVID-19 pandemic – General guidelines for organizations

Version 1

bsi.

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Foreword

The current pandemic has fundamentally shifted the way people live and work. The 'lockdown' that many countries and their populations have been facing has meant a rethink of what was previously considered normal. Capturing the lessons learned as we progress through the phases of the pandemic is crucial. Whilst economic considerations are important, the fundamental principle of protecting human life underpins all economic recovery.

All organizations face questions from their customers, stakeholders, suppliers, investors and the general public. The most important stakeholders for the success of an organization however, are the workers. In order to provide reassurance to all interested parties, protect an organization's reputation and build confidence, planning is crucial.

Building on formal guidance issued by UK Government, BSI has developed this set of guidelines to assist organizations as they adjust the way they work, to protect workers and other people in their workplace from the ongoing risks related to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

This document is not a formal standard, but a set of guidelines, developed at pace, using an agile process. The first version of this document, as presented below, has been reviewed by an expert Advisory Group. This document will be revised frequently to reflect the dynamic situation, taking into account comments from users, government guidance, the level of risk and emerging knowledge.

Each version of this document will be available on BSI's website to provide ongoing guidance to business owners, managers, workers and other users as they deal with the complexities of this changing situation.

Users are encouraged to submit feedback on this document https://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/projects/9020-04219.

Although this document incorporates UK Government guidance, the information and recommendations within it are generally applicable to any organization that needs to manage the risks related to COVID-19, regardless of location.

Comments are therefore welcome from national and international users to ensure the document captures up-to-date knowledge and good working practices that are evolving.

In this document, the following verbal forms are used:

a) "should" indicates a recommendation;
b) "may" indicates a permission; and
c) "can" indicates a possibility or a capability.

Version Control

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0 Introduction

This document is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased risk this disease presents to the health, safety and wellbeing of people in all settings, including the workplace.

The UK Government has published guidance on *Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)*. This guidance emphasizes that workers should not be forced to work in an unsafe workplace. The UK Government states that organizations should implement all reasonable measures to manage risks related to COVID-19 that can affect the health, safety and wellbeing of workers and other relevant interested parties.

This document is aligned to and complements the UK Government guidance. It provides practical recommendations to organizations and workers on how to work safely during the pandemic. It is suitable for organizations that need to resume operations as well as those organizations that have been operational throughout.

This document explains what is expected of both organizations and workers. The guidance is generic and applicable to organizations regardless of the nature of business or service provision or size or complexity. It includes practical examples for different types of organizations to help determine the actions the organization can take to make the workplace safer.

By implementing the guidance in this document, an organization will be able to:

a) understand what it needs to do to protect workers and other relevant interested parties from the risks related to COVID-19;

b) demonstrate that it is addressing risks related to COVID-19 using a systematic approach; and

c) put in place a framework to enable them to adapt to the rapidly changing situation

This document uses a Plan – Do – Check – Act approach.

Plan: plan what needs to be done for the organization to work safely (Clause **4** to Clause **6**).

Do: do what the organization has planned to do (Clause **7** to Clause **9**).

Check: see how well it is working (Clause **10**).

Act: fix problems and look for ways to make what the organization is doing even more effective (Clause **11**).

This document is not intended to be a single step-by-step set of recommendations. It provides a framework in which the PDCA cycle should be repeated, with all parts active at all times, to enable ongoing continual improvement and ensure the organization responds to changes.

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1 Scope

This document provides general guidance to organizations on how to manage the risks related to COVID-19 in order to protect work-related health, safety and wellbeing.

This document is intended for use by organizations of all sizes and sectors including those that:

a) have been operating throughout the pandemic;

b) are resuming operations following full or partial closure; and

c) are re-occupying workplaces that were fully or partially closed.

This document also provides guidance relating to the protection of workers of all types, including employees, volunteers, contractors, those on zero hours contracts, freelancers and the self-employed, and other relevant interested parties.

NOTE *This document does not provide specific guidance for workers in high risk clinical roles.*

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2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

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3 Terms and definitions

For the purpose of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1 organization

person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its objectives

NOTE 1 *to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, association. charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.*

*[SOURCE: BS EN ISO 9000:2015, **3.2.1**, modified]*

3.2 worker

person performing work or work-related activities under the control of the organization

NOTE 1 *to entry: Persons perform work or work-related activities under various arrangements, paid or unpaid, such as regularly or temporarily, intermittently or seasonally, casually or on a part-time basis.*

NOTE 2 *to entry: Workers include top management, managerial and non-managerial persons.*

NOTE 3 *to entry: The work or work-related activities performed under the control of the organization may be performed by workers employed by the organization, workers of external providers, contractors, individuals, agency workers, and by other persons to the extent the organization shares control over their work or work-related activities, according to the context of the organization.*

*[SOURCE: BS ISO 45001:2018, **3.3**]*

3.3 workplace

place under the control of the organization where a person needs to be or to go for work purposes

NOTE 1 *to entry: The organization's responsibilities for the workplace depend on the degree of control over the workplace.*

*[SOURCE: BS ISO 45001:2018, **3.6**, modified]*

3.4 pandemic

worldwide spread of a new disease

[SOURCE: World Health Organization, modified]

3.5 COVID-19

infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus

[SOURCE: World Health Organization, modified]

3.6 wellbeing

fulfilment of the physical, mental and cognitive needs and expectations of a worker related to their work

NOTE 1 *to entry: Wellbeing can also contribute to the quality of life outside of work.*

NOTE 2 *to entry: Wellbeing relates to all aspects of working life, including work organization, social factors at work, work environment, equipment and hazardous tasks.*

*[SOURCE: ISO WD 45003:2020, **3.2**, modified]*

3.7 transmission

transfer of disease

3.8 common areas

spaces and amenities provided for the use of more than one person

NOTE 1 *to entry: examples of common areas include canteens, reception areas, meeting rooms, areas of worship, toilets, gardens, fire escapes, kitchens, fitness facilities, store rooms, laundry facilities*

[SOURCE: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus, modified]

3.9 clinically vulnerable

people who can be at increased risk from COVID-19

NOTE 1 *to entry: clinically vulnerable people include those aged 70 or over and those with some underlying health conditions*

[SOURCE: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus, modified]

3.10 clinically extremely vulnerable

people with specific underlying health conditions that increase the risk of severe illness if they contract COVID-19

[SOURCE: https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus, modified]

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4 Planning

4.1 Understanding the context of the organization

To understand the specific risks to workers, organizations should consider what can affect the ability of individuals to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. How organizations should operate has changed and there is currently an increased risk to health, safety and wellbeing at work.

Before assessing risks, organizations should consider the specific external and internal issues that can affect an organization's ability to work safely and how these issues have been impacted by the pandemic.

External issues can include, but are not limited to:

a) how workers travel to work;
b) workers' access to childcare and schooling;
c) changes or problems in the supply chain;
d) changes in customer needs and expectations, or behaviours;
e) increased or decreased demand for products/services;
f) prevalence of COVID-19 within the organization and the community; and
g) local, regional and national circumstances and related official guidance.

Internal issues can include, but are not limited to:

1) the number and types of workplaces;
2) the type of work;
3) the type of workers in the organization (e.g. employed, contractors, volunteers, freelance);
4) the degree to which it is possible to change the workplace to implement social distancing measures;
5) individual needs of workers (e.g. the clinically vulnerable, workers with childcare issues, carers of the clinically vulnerable, disabled workers, pregnant workers);
6) increased worker absence (e.g. due to sickness, self-isolation requirements, bereavement);
7) resource availability; and
8) how work is organized (e.g. changed work demands, pace of work, time pressure, shift work) and supported and how this impacts health, safety and wellbeing at work.

The organization should take these issues into account when assessing risk and planning to resume or modify operations.

4.2 Leadership and worker participation

Owners, managers and other decision makers should:

a) demonstrate leadership and commitment to safe working practices through effective communication and by complying with official guidance and internal policy at all times;
b) ensure adequate resources are provided (see Clause **5**) and make them available to all relevant workers in a timely and effective manner;
c) actively consult workers, worker representatives and relevant trade unions on decisions that affect health, safety and wellbeing at work;
d) communicate how workers can report incidents or raise concerns and how these will be addressed and communicated; and
e) protect workers from reprisals when reporting incidents or if workers remove themselves from unsafe work situations.

Organizations have a duty of care to their workers. The people who do the work are often more aware of risks related to their role and understand them better than the people at the highest levels of the organization. By encouraging wide input, organizations can have a better overview of risks to health, safety and wellbeing at work during the pandemic. Active and ongoing engagement with workers is likely to result in better outcomes when managing the risks related to COVID-19.

Organizations should:

1) involve workers, worker representatives and relevant trade unions in assessing risks related to COVID-19 and making decisions on how to manage them;
2) communicate to workers and other relevant interested parties (e.g. customers, suppliers, visitors, investors, shareholders, regulators, unions) how the organization is managing risks from COVID-19 (communication can be through any appropriate method, see Clause **6**);

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3) provide one or more ways for workers and other interested parties to give feedback on actions taken to manage work-related health, safety and wellbeing (e.g. through virtual meetings, collaboration tools, online surveys, emails); and
4) take timely and appropriate action to address concerns raised by workers and other interested parties and communicate these actions to them.

4.3 General planning

Planning for safe working enables the organization to identify and prioritize risks related to COVID-19 that can affect work-related health, safety and wellbeing.

Although it is not possible to eliminate the risks related to COVID-19 entirely, planning should aim to ensure the risk to workers is reduced to the lowest reasonably practicable level.

When planning for safe working, organizations should consider:

a) the types of work activities and how that work is organized;
b) where the work takes place and practical changes that need to be made;
c) interaction between workers or others, including the public;
d) the safe use of common areas and shared equipment; and
e) the impact of the pandemic on workers' psychological health and wellbeing at work.

Organizations should take a systematic approach to determining and addressing risks related to COVID-19.

Organizations should identify work activities that:

1) can be done from home;
2) cannot be done from home but can comply with social distancing guidelines in the workplace, if practical adjustments are made; and
3) cannot be done from home and cannot comply with social distancing guidelines in the workplace.

The best way to mitigate work-related risks from COVID-19 is to enable and support workers to work from home. The organization should ensure additional support measures are implemented to protect the psychological health and wellbeing for workers who are working from home. The organization should consider if it is possible to enable a safe return to the physical workplace for individual workers when home working has a significant negative impact on their psychological health and wellbeing.

Work activities that cannot be done from home and cannot comply with social distancing guidelines with practical adjustments may only take place if they are essential for the operation of the organization and additional controls are implemented to mitigate the risks to health, safety and wellbeing at work.

When planning to address risks related to COVID-19, the organization should take into account existing occupational health and safety (OH&S) risks and measures already in place to manage these. The organization should:

- assess if existing safety measures and controls need to be adjusted;
- consider new OH&S risks that can be introduced by implementing additional safety measures to manage the risks related to COVID-19; and
- plan actions to address new OH&S risks.

4.4 Workplaces

4.4.1 General

The organization should ensure that workplaces (including all premises, sites and other locations where work takes place) and facilities within those workplaces are clean and safe to use.

To prepare for safe operation, the organization should, as a minimum:

a) assess all premises, sites, or parts of sites, including those that have been closed or partially operating;
b) perform maintenance checks and activities on equipment and systems;
c) establish enhanced and/or more frequent cleaning schedules;
d) provide enhanced personal hygiene facilities, including additional handwashing stations where possible and hand sanitizer points where this is not possible; and
e) coordinate and cooperate with other organizations on shared sites, including with contractors, landlords and other tenants.

Further actions organizations should take include, but are not limited to:

1) deep cleaning of workplaces and equipment;
2) disinfection of taps, showers and other sources of water, ensuring these are flushed through before use and tested if appropriate;
3) ensuring sufficient fresh air ventilation and minimizing recirculation of air;
4) restarting and testing specialist equipment which has been unused for longer than usual;

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5) putting in place signs and floor or wall markings to indicate recommended social distancing;
6) creating working zones to limit the number of people in any one area;
7) limiting the number of people using shared equipment by creating working teams or pairs and assigning them to designated shared equipment;
8) establishing cleaning stations to enable workers to wipe surfaces and equipment throughout working hours;
9) reorganizing moveable equipment, desks and workstations to enable social distancing;
10) establishing processes for safe entry and exit from workplaces;
11) establishing one-way systems in corridors, stairways and other common areas and taking other actions to mitigate the risks where this is not possible;
12) determining safe ways of using lifts/elevators, including limiting capacity and providing hand sanitizer, ensuring guidance for safe use is communicated both inside and outside of lifts/elevators; and
13) providing additional outside spaces for workers to use for breaks, where possible.

4.4.2 Working in other people's homes

Workers should not perform work activities in other people's homes where someone has symptoms of COVID-19 (or is self-isolating after being exposed to someone with COVID-19) or is considered clinically extremely vulnerable and has been asked to shield, except:

a) to provide essential health and personal care (e.g. medical or social care workers); or
b) to remedy a direct risk to safety (e.g. emergency repairs by a plumber, electrician, gas engineer).

When preparing for workers to perform activities in other people's homes, the organization should:

1) check if anyone in the household has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been advised to shield;
2) consider if the work can be performed using digital or remote alternatives (e.g. video or phone consultations);
3) communicate with households prior to work commencing to discuss and agree how work will be carried out and general practices to minimize risk (e.g. how to enter the building without face-to-face contact, maintaining social distancing whilst the worker is in the home, leaving internal doors open to minimize contact with door handles);
4) assign workers to work in households local to them, wherever possible, to minimize travel and use of public transport; and
5) allocate the same individual or pairs of workers to a household if repeat visits are necessary or the work is ongoing (e.g. the same carers, cleaners).

4.5 Roles

In assessing roles, activities and whether a worker should work on-site or at home, the organization should take into account those workers who:

a) are considered clinically vulnerable;
b) are caring for someone who is clinically vulnerable;
c) are in a household with someone who is clinically vulnerable;
d) have protected characteristics and are entitled to additional reasonable adjustments; and
e) need additional support to protect their psychological health and wellbeing.

Workers with roles that can be carried out remotely should continue to work from home. To ensure this is effective, the organization should:

1) provide access to the organization's systems (e.g. email, shared electronic drives, video conferencing, databases);
2) determine if additional essential equipment is needed and provide this if possible;
3) establish regular virtual meetings to provide support, monitor wellbeing, address wellbeing issues and ensure they are connected to other workers, including those working on-site; and
4) ensure individual worker needs are understood and accommodated as far as possible.

For workers who need to be physically on-site, the organization should:

- determine which roles are critical for operational continuity, safe facility management or regulatory requirements and cannot be performed remotely;
- identify workers in critical roles who are unable to work remotely due to home circumstances or the unavailability of specialist equipment;
- determine the minimum number of workers needed on-site at any one time to operate safely and effectively; and
- determine how activities are organized (e.g. reducing job rotation, requiring workers to perform one activity with one set of equipment throughout the shift).

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The organization should offer clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) workers who cannot work from home the option of the safest available roles in the workplace. Such roles should allow workers to maintain social distancing at all times. If clinically vulnerable workers cannot comply with social distancing guidelines, the organization should consult with the worker, worker representatives and relevant trade unions to assess if there is an acceptable level of risk if additional safety measures and controls are implemented.

The organization should ensure that safety measures or controls introduced do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others (e.g. workers with caring responsibilities, workers with religious commitments, workers with disabilities, pregnant women).

4.6 Activities

If social distancing guidelines cannot be complied with for an essential activity, the organization should take all possible further mitigating actions to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 between workers and other people in the workplace.

Before resuming work, the organization should take mitigating actions, such as:

a) establishing fixed small teams or pairs of workers to limit the number of people in close contact: teams or pairs should be treated as a unit if any worker develops COVID-19 symptoms and all members of the unit should self-isolate following government guidance;
b) revising work instructions to enable safe operation of activities (e.g. keeping activity times as short as possible, using screens or barriers to separate people, using back-to-back or side-to-side working instead of face-to-face);
c) establishing distinct zones for work activities which cannot comply with social distancing;
d) identifying activities where workers directly pass objects (e.g. job information, spare parts, samples, purchased items) to each other or to other people, including the public, and establish processes to remove direct contact (e.g. drop-off or transfer zones); and
e) providing appropriate PPE and guidance on how it should be used.

4.7 Emergency preparedness and response

The organization should prepare for foreseeable emergencies and revise existing processes if necessary.

The organization should consider, for example:

a) fire evacuation processes (e.g. guidance on evacuating in teams to limit close contact, adjusting how workers are required to muster outside the building to increase social distancing between teams);
b) providing additional appropriate PPE for first aiders in case of medical emergency or accidents; and
c) providing clear guidance on processes for dealing with aggressive or violent people.

In an emergency where there is immediate danger (e.g. chemical spill, fire, break-in) complying with social distancing guidelines can be challenging. The organization should take this into account when planning and amend emergency plans to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in emergency situations, as far as practicable.

Organizations should consider carrying out fire drills, simulations or other practice exercises to raise awareness of amended emergency plans. When planning for these exercises, the organization should ensure that additional safety controls and measures are in place if social distancing cannot be maintained during, for example, evacuation from the workplace.

The organization should ensure that workers who provide assistance to others in emergency situations take additional and immediate hygiene measures following the emergency event, including hand washing.

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5 Resources

The organization should determine what resources are needed to effectively manage the risk related to COVID-19 and ensure sufficient resources are in place.

The organization should establish processes to ensure that essential resources are maintained, appropriately managed and can be supplied reliably as needed.

Workers with responsibility for managing resources to mitigate the risks related to COVID-19 should be clearly identified and communicated to workers and other relevant interested parties. The organization should ensure there is a process to enable ongoing dialogue with workers about specific needs for resources to manage COVID-19 and how workers can escalate issues.

When determining the resources needed to resume and maintain essential activities, the organization should consider:

a) human resources, including practical and psychological support to workers;
b) financial resources;
c) appropriate PPE;
d) handwashing, hand sanitizing, and cleaning materials;
e) technology;
f) infrastructure and equipment;
g) communication methods (see Clause **6**); and
h) the need for and availability of additional expertise and training.

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6 Communication

6.1 General

The organization should communicate its commitment to managing the risks related to COVID-19 and inform workers and other relevant interested parties of:

a) general safety measures and controls;
b) required ways of working, taking into account the needs of individual and groups workers;
c) what is expected of them;
d) what they can expect from the organization; and
e) how to report concerns or safety incidents.

The organization should use a combination of formal and informal communication methods (e.g. intranet, website, email, signs, images, symbols, phone calls, audio announcements, video) so messages are accessible and can be understood by all relevant interested parties, including those with disabilities, non-native English speakers and people with differing levels of literacy.

Preferred methods of communication (e.g. emails or personal phone calls rather than video conferences with groups) should be taken into account for workers with different needs, giving consideration to neurodiversity.

Communication with workers and other relevant interested parties should be two-way and methods should facilitate ongoing conversation as well as more formal consultation.

Communications should provide clear and up-to-date guidance on social distancing, hygiene and required behaviours:

1) before arrival at the workplace (e.g. by phone, website, intranet, email);
2) on arrival at the workplace (e.g. signs, posters, screens, announcements, induction [see **9.2**]); and
3) throughout the workplace (e.g. signs, posters, screens, announcements).

Regular communications should be provided on changes to processes, guidance and the levels of risk related to COVID-19.

The organization should:

- establish who is responsible for communicating safety guidance to visitors, delivery workers, customers and other people (ensuring more than one person can perform this role);
- provide necessary training to workers who act as hosts for visitors, or need to interact with delivery workers, customers, the public, etc.;
- communicate relevant information about operational changes, safety measures and controls to suppliers, customers and other relevant interested parties; and
- review communications frequently to ensure they are effective and take action if issues are identified.

6.2 Communication for first return to work

The organization should take all reasonable measures to ensure workers understand the behaviours, processes and working practices required to manage the risk of transmission of COVID-19 before returning to work.

In addition to the actions recommended in **6.1**, before workers return to the workplace the organization should:

a) develop communication and training materials;
b) provide guidance on safe travel to and from work (e.g. encouraging walking, cycling and personal vehicles where possible, and social distancing and face coverings if workers need to use public transport);
c) provide clear guidance on staggered start and finish times, shifts or any other altered working patterns or schedules;
d) provide guidance on social distancing, hygiene and general ways of working;
e) communicate new processes for entering the workplace, beginning work and the use of common areas; and
f) communicate changes to emergency procedures (see **4.7**).

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6.3 Ongoing communication

The organization should ensure all workers are regularly reminded of safety measures and controls and kept up-to-date if these are changed or additional safety measures or controls are implemented.

The organization should:

a) ensure ongoing engagement with workers, worker representatives and relevant trade unions to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to ways of working, how work is organized and the physical workplace; and

b) communicate regularly with workers, including those working remotely, to check mental health and wellbeing and to give clear information on issues that are known to negatively affect mental health (e.g. uncertainty about pay, job security, availability of appropriate PPE).

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7 Hygiene

The organization should implement processes to keep the workplace clean, reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated surfaces and enable good hygiene throughout working hours and at the end of each working shift.

Frequent hand washing with hot water and soap is recommended to limit transmission of COVID-19. When hand washing is not possible, hands should be sanitized with an alcohol-based sanitizer.

The organization should implement processes to ensure:

a) workers wash their hands (or sanitize if this is not possible) at frequent intervals and communicate when this should be done (e.g. before entering or leaving an area of the workplace, before and after breaks, before and after handling shared resources such as telephones, computers, tools);

b) additional handwashing and/or hand sanitizing facilities are available in all workplaces;

c) additional cleaning materials are available to workers to enable frequent cleaning of workstations and equipment, including between use by different workers;

d) frequent cleaning of surfaces that are touched regularly (e.g. door handles, light switches, counters, pay points, testing surfaces, shared resources);

e) effective, adequate and frequent waste disposal;

f) promotion of good hygiene practices, including posters and signs to remind workers of required handwashing techniques and frequency, the need to avoid touching faces, and to cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or into their elbow;

g) safe use of toilets, showers and changing rooms, replacing hand dryers with paper towels where possible.

The organization should require workers to keep personal belongings in personal spaces, such as lockers, if possible, and to ensure that belongings are removed from the workplace at the end of each shift.

The organization should take action to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles used by the organization.

The organization should restrict non-essential deliveries, including personal deliveries to workers.

The organization should establish processes to:

1) ensure materials, equipment and other objects entering the workplace are cleaned to reduce transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated surfaces;

2) clean shared equipment after each use;

3) regularly clean vehicles used for work activities, including vehicles workers drive home; and

4) increase handwashing for workers handling deliveries or provide hand sanitizer where this is not practical.

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8 Use of personal protective equipment and face coverings

Personal protective equipment (PPE) protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment, such as face masks. If workers are required to use PPE to protect against risks unrelated to transmission of COVID-19 they should continue to do so.

Unless workers are in a workplace or role where the risk of transmission of COVID-19 is very high (e.g. health and social care) the role of PPE in providing additional protection can be limited. PPE is not a replacement for working from home, social distancing, handwashing and other hygiene measures.

Face coverings can provide some protection against transmission of COVID-19, however specialist PPE (e.g. respirators, masks to protect workers from dust and other industrial airborne hazards) should be reserved for those who need them to perform their roles.

If face coverings or other additional PPE is required to manage the risks related to COVID-19, the organization should:

a) establish guidelines for when and how PPE should be used;
b) provide suitable PPE free of charge;
c) ensure PPE is used appropriately, correctly fitted and disposed of safely after use; and
d) ensure workers take regular breaks to minimize fatigue caused by using PPE, which can lead to reduced compliance to safety measures and unsafe use of equipment.

Organizations should support workers who choose to use a face covering not required by the organization (e.g. homemade face coverings or other face coverings not provided by the organization) and ensure they:

1) wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before putting the face covering on and after removing it;
2) avoid touching their face or face covering when wearing it, to avoid contamination;
3) change the face covering if it becomes damp or if it has been touched;
4) continue to regularly wash their hands and sanitize hands where this is not possible;
5) change the face covering each day, as a minimum, and more often if necessary;
6) wash the face covering at a high temperature before/after each use if the material is washable; if it is not washable, it should be disposed with the usual waste; and
7) continue to comply with social distancing guidelines, wherever possible.

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9 Operations

9.1 General

The organization should ensure processes are in place to address the risks identified in **4.3**, **4.4**, **4.5**, and **4.7**, including implementing measures to enable home working, and social distancing and other safety measures and controls in the workplace.

In activities and situations where it is impossible to fully comply with social distancing guidelines, organizations should implement the actions outlined in **4.6** and ensure that activity times involved are kept as short as possible.

If an activity requires face-to-face work for a sustained period without being able to comply with social distancing, or bringing workers into contact with people other than their assigned team or pair, the organization should assess if the activity can safely go ahead.

No worker is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

9.2 First return to work

The organization should ensure an induction process is implemented and maintained to ensure changes to the workplace and ways of working are communicated to all workers on first return to work. This should be in addition to communications provided before the return to work and should include guidance for specific roles or activities.

The organization should:

a) ensure all workers returning to work, or attending a different workplace or site, are provided with full induction;

b) limit the number of workers being inducted at one time to enable social distancing; and

c) consider using outside spaces for induction where safe and possible.

9.3 Coming to work and leaving work

The organization should ensure social distancing is maintained wherever possible and require handwashing (or hand sanitizing if this is not possible) on arrival and departure.

The organization should also:

a) stagger arrival and departure times to reduce crowding at entry and exit points;

b) provide additional entry and exit points if possible;

c) provide additional parking or facilities such as bike racks where possible;

d) limit the number of passengers in vehicles used by the organization, such as minibuses. This can include leaving seats empty;

e) use social distancing indicators on the floors or walls and introduce one-way systems at entry and exit points;

f) create separate entry and exit points for high-risk work areas or sites (e.g. mechanical test sites, wet labs);

g) provide alternatives to touch-based security devices, such as keypads;

h) provide storage for workers' clothes and bags;

i) provide facilities for workers to change into work clothing and equipment on-site, where social distancing and hygiene guidelines can be met; and

j) wash or clean work clothing and equipment (e.g. uniforms, hard hats, goggles, gloves) on-site if possible.

9.4 Moving around workplaces

The organization should ensure processes are in place to maintain social distancing wherever possible, while people move through the workplace.

Organizations should:

a) reduce movement within buildings and sites (e.g. restrict access to specific work areas only to workers who need to be there, encourage use of radios or telephones, where permitted, cleaning them between use if these are shared);

b) remove access controls (e.g. electronic barriers, keypads) in low risk areas to reduce surface contamination;

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c) use teams/pairs or timed booking processes to reduce the number of people in a work area at one time;
d) introduce one-way systems through buildings, paying particular attention to long or narrow corridors, stairs, walkways and turnstiles;
e) encourage the use of stairs and reduce maximum occupancy for lifts/elevators, providing hand sanitizer for their operation; and
f) enable people with disabilities to safely access and use lifts/elevators.

9.5 Work zones and workstations

Organizations should ensure social distancing between individual workers in work zones and at workstations wherever possible.

The organization should:

a) review work zones and move workstations to enable social distancing between each station, paying attention to the space needed to move to and from workstations;
b) arrange workstations so that workers are side-by-side or back-to-back;
c) if workstations are fixed at less than the recommended distance, consider blocking the use of some workstations, or use screens to separate workers;
d) assign workstations and equipment to individual workers, wherever possible, or teams/pairs where this is not possible (e.g. call centres, training facilities);
e) use floor or wall markers to indicate recommended social distancing;
f) reduce the number of workers in a work zone to enable social distancing in restricted spaces; and
g) limit the use of high-touch items and shared equipment and enable frequent cleaning.

9.6 Use of common areas

Organizations should implement processes to facilitate the safe use of essential common areas, including:

a) frequent cleaning;
b) limiting the number of people in common areas at one time;
c) limiting how long people can be in common areas; and
d) social distancing.

Organizations should consider:

1) staggering break times and encouraging the use of safe outside areas if possible;
2) creating additional common spaces in other parts of the workplace;
3) installing screens to protect workers in reception or similar areas;
4) encouraging workers to bring in their own food or providing packaged meals to avoid opening canteens where appropriate;
5) moving seating and tables to enable social distancing and reduce face-to-face interaction;
6) encouraging workers to remain in the workplace (including designated outdoor space) throughout working hours and requiring compliance to social distancing if leaving the workplace;
7) regulating the use of locker or changing rooms, showers and other common facilities; and
8) encouraging storage of personal items in personal spaces, e.g. lockers, during working hours.

9.7 Meetings and visits to the workplace

Organizations should limit visits to the workplace and use remote working technology to avoid both external and internal face-to-face meetings.

If physical meetings are essential, the organization should:

a) limit participation to the minimum number of essential people and maintain social distancing;
b) avoid shared resources (e.g. pens, water or coffee jugs);
c) provide hand sanitizers in the meeting room;
d) hold meetings outside or in well-ventilated rooms, if possible; and
e) use floor or wall marking to indicate acceptable social distancing.

If visitors to the workplace are essential, the organization should communicate expected behaviours and processes for safely entering the building in advance of the visit.

The organization should also:

1) restrict access to required visitors only;
2) limit the number of visitors in the workplace at any time;
3) limit visits to specific times;

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4) revise schedules for essential service and other contractor visits to reduce interaction (e.g. outside of normal hours to limit interaction with workers or customers);
5) ensure visitor details are recorded to enable contact tracing, if necessary (e.g. names, dates and who is hosting the visit);
6) revise how visitor details are recorded and how visitors enter and exit the workplace (e.g. details recorded by a receptionist to avoid shared pens, using one-way systems to enter and exit, using disposable visitor badges); and
7) ensure visitors understand and comply with social distancing and other safety measures and controls.

9.8 Working with the public

The organization should ensure controls are in place to maintain social distancing and to minimize risks to workers from interaction with customers and members of the public.

The organization should take actions such as:

a) using posters, signs, marketing emails and other communications to inform customers and other members of the public of safety measures and controls and how to maintain social distancing;
b) limiting the number of customers in the building so that social distancing can be maintained;
c) using safe outdoor space for queuing, where possible, using floor or wall markings to indicate social distancing intervals;
d) making regular announcements to remind customers to maintain social distancing and follow other safety measures;
e) providing hand sanitizers at entrances;
f) ensuring cleaning of frequently touched areas and shared resources, (e.g. card payment and cash machine keypads, handles of baskets and trolleys);
g) limiting customer handling of products (e.g. through different display methods, signs, rotation of high-touch items);
h) providing physical barriers such as screens in places where interaction between workers and customers is frequent (e.g. pay points, customer service desks);
i) reducing customer facilities and adapting services if social distancing cannot be complied with (e.g. closing fitting rooms, using fixed pairs of workers to carry heavy items to customers' vehicles);
j) encouraging contactless payment and refunds;
k) establishing no-contact collection and return points; and
l) staggering collection times.

9.9 Work-related travel and deliveries

The organization should avoid all unnecessary work travel and ensure controls are in place to keep workers safe when they do need to travel or when making or receiving deliveries.

If work-related travel is necessary, the organization should:

a) minimize the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle;
b) use fixed teams or pairs;
c) increase ventilation in motor vehicles (e.g. open windows);
d) ensure workers avoid sitting face-to-face;
e) ensure vehicles are cleaned between shifts and before use by other workers; and
f) centrally log if a worker is required to stay away from home overnight and ensure overnight accommodation complies with social distancing and hygiene guidelines.

The organization should take action to ensure deliveries can be made and received safely.

The organization should:

1) minimize person-to-person contact during deliveries including during payment and exchange of documentation (e.g. electronic tools for payment, signing and document exchange);
2) revise pick-up and drop-off collection points (e.g. zones with social distancing markings, no-contact drop-offs to customers and other work sites);
3) reduce the frequency of incoming deliveries (e.g. establishing central procurement processes to avoid external deliveries to different sites, ordering larger quantities less often);
4) use single workers or fixed pairs to load or unload vehicles;
5) provide controlled, safe access to welfare facilities (e.g. toilets) for delivery drivers;
6) encourage drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise safe working practice; and
7) ensure regular cleaning of reusable delivery boxes, loading equipment, etc.

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10 Performance evaluation

10.1 Monitoring and evaluation

The organization should use a systematic approach to monitor and evaluate:

a) how effective safety measures and controls to protect workers are;

b) how the work is being done; and

c) behaviours of workers and other people in the workplace.

Monitoring and evaluation activities should:

1) determine the extent to which the guidance is being complied with;

2) determine if processes for ongoing risk assessments are in place and operating effectively;

3) determine the extent to which controls are working and if these need to be changed, enhanced or enforced more actively;

4) determine if the use of controls is creating new risks that need to be addressed; and

5) take into account feedback from workers, worker representatives and relevant trade unions.

10.2 Management review, incidents and reporting

The organization should review the outputs of monitoring and evaluation (see **10.1**) at regular intervals and take into account:

a) issues identified with people's level of compliance to safety measures and controls put in place;

b) incidents reported by workers and other relevant interested parties;

c) root cause(s) of incidents; and

d) effectiveness of actions taken to deal with incidents, including actions taken at the time of the incident and actions to address the root causes of the incident.

The results of the management review should be communicated to workers and other relevant interested parties as appropriate. Communications should include actions taken and other improvement measures that are or will be introduced (see Clause **11**).

It is a UK legal requirement that the organization make a formal report to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) if:

1) an incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19;

2) a worker has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work; or

3) a worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to the coronavirus that causes COVID-19.

Further information on reporting requirements can be found on the HSE website.

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11 Improvement

The organization should determine opportunities for improving how it manages risks related to COVID-19 and implement necessary actions.

The organization should take into account the results of monitoring, evaluation and review (see Clause **10**) and:

a) take immediate actions to improve or change safety measures and controls that are not effective;

b) implement additional safety measures and controls if needed; and

c) address changes to the external and internal issues that can affect health, safety and wellbeing at work (see **4.1**), including changes to legal requirements or official guidance.

To ensure the organization continues to manage the risks related to COVID-19, it should review the recommendations in this document regularly to take into account the dynamic nature of the situation.

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Bibliography/Further resources

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