

Construction Sector - Site Operating Procedures

Protecting Your Workforce During Coronavirus (Covid-19)

The Site Operating Procedures have always reflected the latest Government guidance.

Whilst COVID-19 remains widespread across the UK and will need to be managed for some time to come, the lifting of the remaining legal restrictions, including social distancing requirements, from 19 July 2021 means that the Site Operating Procedures are no longer current and remain available as a reference document.

The [Use of Face Coverings in Construction](#) has been updated in line with the latest Government guidance that face coverings should be worn in crowded and enclosed spaces when people mix with others that they don't normally meet.

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Introduction

These Site Operating Procedures (SOP) are based on Government guidance on [Working safely during Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) - Construction and other outdoor work](#) in England; other restrictions and advice may apply in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#), as well as in areas subject to a localised lockdown. The objective is to introduce consistent measures on construction sites of all types and sizes and employers and individuals should make every effort to comply.

Where workers enter people's homes, they should follow the Government guidance on [Working in Other People's Homes](#).

The [HSE](#) is the relevant enforcing authority for occupational health and safety legislation and guidance to control public health risks in the construction sector. If a site is not complying with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus (Covid-19), it may be subject to enforcement action.

Construction sites need to ensure they are protecting their workforce and minimising the risk of spread of Coronavirus (Covid-19) infection. This includes considering how personnel travel to and from site.

Government guidance for employers in England states "*where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, even through redesigning a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff*".

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

Organisations must have in place effective arrangements for monitoring and reviewing their compliance with Government and industry guidance.

The workforce should be reminded during inductions and daily briefings of the specific social distancing and Coronavirus (Covid-19) control measures necessary to protect them, their colleagues, families and the UK population.

When to Go to Work

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

Social distancing	<p>Workers in the construction industry should follow the guidance on Social Distancing. Where they cannot work from home, they must follow guidance on Meeting With Others Safely and Safer Travel while travelling to and from work and while at work.</p> <p>Anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable to Coronavirus (Covid-19) should follow the latest guidance on shielding.</p>
Self-isolation	<p>Anyone who has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19); • received a positive Coronavirus (Covid-19) test result; • a member of their household or support bubble showing symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) or with a positive test result; • returned from a country that is not on the travel corridor list; or • been contacted by the NHS Test & Trace Service; <p>must follow the guidance on self-isolation and should not come to site.</p> <p>It is a legal requirement to self-isolate in the event of a positive test result or when told to do so by NHS Test & Trace</p>
If someone falls ill	<p>If a worker develops symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) whilst at work, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their manager or supervisor is informed • Return home immediately • Avoid touching anything

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. <p>They should get a Coronavirus (Covid-19) test.</p> <p>They must follow Stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection and not return to site until they have received a negative test result or, in the event of a positive test result, until they have completed their period of self-isolation and are no longer unwell.</p> <p>Sites that identify five or more cases within 14 days will need to contact their local Public Health England protection team.</p> <p>Further information can be found in the 'What to do if a worker has Covid-19 or has to self-isolate' flowchart.</p>
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Travel to Work

Using Private Vehicles

Wherever possible workers should try not to share a vehicle with those outside their household or support bubble.

If workers have no option but to share transport, they should try to:

- Share with the same individuals and with the minimum number of people (up to a maximum of 6) at any one time
- Keep the windows open
- Travel side by side or behind other people, rather than facing them, where seating arrangements allow
- Maximise the distance between people
- Wear a face covering
- The vehicle should be cleaned between journeys, especially touch points, using gloves and standard cleaning products.

Using Public Transport

Where public transport is the only option for workers, they:

- Should try to avoid travelling during peak times (05:45 - 08:15 and 16:00 - 17:30); and
- Must wear a face covering.

Sites should consider:

- Changing and staggering site hours to reduce congestion on public transport
- Parking arrangements for additional vehicles and bicycles
- Providing facilities such as lockers and showers
- Providing hand cleaning facilities at entrances and exits. This should be soap and water wherever possible or hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available
- How someone taken ill would get home.

Driving at Work

When travelling at work or between site locations, workers should travel alone. If workers have no option but to share a vehicle, then they should follow the Government guidance on [Working Safely during Coronavirus \(Covid-19\) - Vehicles](#), which provides information for people who work in or from vehicles, including couriers, mobile workers, lorry drivers, on-site transit and work vehicles, field forces and similar.

Site Access and Egress Points

- Stop all non-essential visitors
- Consider introducing staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Plan and manage site access and egress points to enable and control social distancing – you may need to change the number of access points, either increase to reduce congestion or decrease to enable monitoring, including in the case of emergencies
- Introduce one-way systems
- Allow plenty of space between people waiting to enter site
- Use signage:
 - such as floor markings, to ensure current social distancing requirements are maintained between people when queuing
 - reminding workers not to attend if they have symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) and to follow guidelines
- Require all workers to wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water when entering and leaving the site
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control and delivery areas e.g. entry systems, scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets and desks, particularly during peak flow times
- Reduce the number of people in attendance at site inductions and consider holding them outdoors wherever possible
- Where loading and offloading arrangements on site will allow it, delivery drivers should remain in their vehicles. Where drivers are required to exit their vehicle, they should wash or sanitise their hands before handling any materials
- [Drivers](#) must be provided with access to suitable toilet and hand washing facilities and made aware of the social distancing measures in place
- Consider arrangements for monitoring compliance.

Hand Washing

- Allow regular breaks to wash hands
- Provide additional hand washing facilities (e.g. pop ups) to the usual welfare facilities, particularly on a large spread out site or where there are significant numbers of personnel on site, including plant operators
- 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 (e.g. use a welfare attendant) and use signage, such as floor markings, to maintain current social distancing requirements
- 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 cleaned and emptied more frequently
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Canteens and Rest Areas

Face coverings must be worn in canteens (where food is served), except when seated at a table to eat or drink, and Government guidance on [Keeping workers and customers safe during Covid-19 in restaurants](#) should be followed. This [Food Standards Agency Checklist](#) may also be helpful.

- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available on site if possible
- The capacity should be clearly identified at the entry to each facility, and where necessary attendants provided to supervise compliance with social distancing measures
- Break times should be staggered to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Drinking water should be provided with enhanced cleaning measures of the tap mechanism introduced
- Frequently clean surfaces that are touched regularly, using standard cleaning products e.g. kettles, refrigerators, microwaves
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance to any room where people eat and should be used by workers when entering and leaving the area
- Seating and tables should be reconfigured to reduce face to face interactions
- All rubbish should be put straight in the bin and not left for someone else to clear up
- Tables and chairs should be cleaned between each use
- Crockery, eating utensils, cups etc. should be disposable or washed and dried between use
- Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible
- Canteen staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food
- Canteen staff and workers may use the same rest areas if they apply the same social distancing measures
- Consider arrangements for monitoring compliance.

Changing Facilities, Showers and Drying Rooms

- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available on site if possible
- Based on the size of each facility, determine how many people can use it at any one time to maintain current social distancing requirements
- 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.

Work Planning to Avoid Close Working

Sites and work need to be planned and organised to avoid crowding and minimise the risk of spread of infection by following Government guidance and the advice within these Site Operating Procedures.

Hierarchy of Controls

If you are not able to work whilst maintaining current social distancing requirements, 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. The results of risk assessments should be shared with the workforce and this [poster](#) displayed in the workplace.

Eliminate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers who are unwell with symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) should not travel to or attend the workplace • Rearrange tasks to enable them to be done by one person, or in a way that maintains current social distancing requirements • Avoid skin to skin contact and face to face working • Stairs should be used in preference to lifts or hoists and consider one ways systems • Consider alternative or additional mechanical aids to reduce worker interface <p>Site Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only absolutely necessary meeting participants should attend • Attendees should maintain current social distancing requirements • Rooms should be well ventilated / windows opened to allow fresh air circulation • Hold meetings in open areas where possible
Reduce	<p>Risk mitigation, where current social distancing requirements cannot be maintained, could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the frequency and time workers are working together • Minimise the number of workers involved in tasks • Workers should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face • Lower the worker capacity of lifts and hoists to reduce congestion and contact at all times • Regularly clean common touchpoints, doors, buttons, handles, vehicle cabs, tools, equipment etc. • Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces • Workers should wash their hands before and after using any equipment
Isolate	<p>Keep groups of workers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together in teams e.g. do not change workers within teams • As small as possible • Away from other workers where possible
Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider introducing an enhanced authorisation process • Provide additional supervision to monitor and manage compliance
PPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coronavirus (COVID-19) needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and the hierarchy of control and not through the use of PPE • Workplaces should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against Coronavirus (COVID-19)
Behaviours	<p>The measures necessary to minimise the risk of spread of infection rely on everyone in the industry taking responsibility for their actions and behaviours</p> <p>Encourage an open and collaborative approach between workers and employers on site where any issues can be openly discussed and addressed</p>

First Aid and Emergency Service Response

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

- When planning site activities, the provision of adequate first aid resources must be agreed between the relevant parties on site
- 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 site, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- Taps and washing facilities
- Toilet flush and seats
- Door handles and push plates
- Hand rails on staircases and corridors
- Lift and hoist controls
- Machinery and equipment controls
- 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.
- Telephone equipment
- Key boards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.