COVID-19
The New Normal

A guidance to assist an organisation when planning to return to normal operations post COVID-19. This document has been prepared by the Energy Institute – Health Technical Committee and Occupational Hygienists.

It should be used by those seeking to undertake a COVID-19 risk assessment to help implement a return to work process. These arrangements should be reviewed as the return to work process progresses and revised where necessary.

Whilst there are examples of how the document may be utilised within the United Kingdom, it can be adapted to suit the requirements of overseas organisations and the legislation by which it is governed.

CONTENTS

1. Workplace selection

- Work-based/remote – A COVID-19 risk assessment should be carried out before any return to work. The risk assessment should include, but not be restricted to:

  i. Legislation/latest guidance – the further reading list at the end of this document provides useful sources of legislation to assist the user when undertaking the risk assessment.

  ii. Location of premises (rural/urban/peripatetic):

      1. Urban locations are generally more accessible due to improved public transport links, although public transport may pose its own risks to health.
      2. Rural locations will generally be harder to access although, if risk assessments are followed and adhered to, health risks may be substantially reduced.
      3. Peripatetic working requires greater consideration as provision must be made at each site to accommodate individuals. This will involve enhance sanitisation, provision of desk space and welfare provision. Where the sites are operated by different organisations, it is important to ascertain the individual arrangements put in place by each company and to fully communicate own expectations.

  iii. Minimum staffing levels:

      1. Staffing levels should reflect the ability of an organisation to safely undertake the day-to-day operation of any plant and equipment, and provide adequate staffing for emergency response (in line with the safety case, where applicable).

  iv. Necessity to be at premises vs. controlling lone working:

      1. Organisations should consider the benefits and risks of returning staff to the workplace against the risks of prolonged periods of working remotely. Further reading material to assist is provided at the foot of this guidance in 'References and Information Sources'.

  v. Transport availability and means:

      1. Unless occupants are from the same household, car sharing may not be appropriate to maintain social distancing.
      2. Where internal transport is required, social distancing should be considered and occupancy of minibuses or buses should be reduced to adhere to guidelines.

  vi. Internal travel guidelines:

      1. Organisations should ensure that prior to any staff returning to work, internal travel guidelines are updated to reflect changes implemented.

  vii. External (including overseas) travel guidelines (e.g. journey planning):

      1. Initial assessment should be undertaken as to whether the anticipated travel is business critical or if the task can be undertaken remotely.
      2. External travel should be assessed against current legislation domestically or, if overseas travel is anticipated, against legislation locally and of the destination nation, and governmental advice for the destination nation e.g. Foreign & Commonwealth Office advice for overseas if departing from UK.

- Review existing risks:
  i. Home working, social distancing or changes in previous work patterns may increase other risks or introduce new risks completely.
     1. Lone working – lone working risk assessments may need to be undertaken. See Point 3 for links to relevant assessment guidance.
     2. Working from home
     3. Working from home policies should be updated and members of staff given advice on any new procedures or policies which are implemented. Ref HSE Home Working.

- Visitor protocols for external and third-party meeting venues:
  i. Advance notification/security requirements:
     1. Review notification requirements for visitors and contractors.
     2. Non-employees should be required to notify in advance of arrival.
     3. Consideration should be given to limiting numbers of visitors on site to maintain social distancing.
     4. Communicate new protocols to on-site security.
     5. Communicate new protocols to visitors and contractors to ensure unnecessary and unauthorised third parties are kept to a minimum.
  ii. Screening/testing requirements:
     1. If there are any national or regional requirements on screening or testing then these should be followed, but in other situations the following may be considered:
        a. Temperature screening: the latest scientific evidence suggests that this does not have any merit, and obtaining accurate temperature measurement equipment is expensive.
        b. Questionnaires: administratively these can be complex to manage and rely on the honesty of the individual. They also potentially have data General Data Protection Regulation issues as the data will be of a personal/sensitive nature.
        c. COVID-19 PCR Testing: seek guidance from government health agencies on availability of testing. So-called immunological testing for testing antibodies against COVID-19 are not currently reliable and are not recommended. Care will be needed on the messaging around these subjects as employees may feel they are not being adequately protected.
  iii. Review third-party measures taken:
     1. Where external visits are necessary for company employees, ascertain security requirements of the host company to ensure their policies are adhered to.

- Start times:
  i. Staggered start times:
  1. Businesses may look to relocate staff to 'out of town' locations to avoid public transport. This may bring its own problems such as:
     a. Poorer accessibility – Transport connectivity to remote locations may increase journey times. Whilst utilisation of public transport may be less to these locations, frequency of service may be less making travel to and from these locations lengthy.
     b. Childcare issues – Parents may have existing childcare arrangements in place based on location of workplace. Any change in workplace location may result in these arrangements becoming impossible.
     c. Home schooling/return to school issues – Consideration should be given for parents of children who have not yet been able to return to school who may not be able to access childcare and to those parents providing home-schooling who may require a degree of flexibility in work scheduling. Ref SOM Homeworking Parenting clash.
     d. Car sharing restrictions – Car sharing may prove impossible due to social distancing. This may result in more employee vehicles than usual arriving at the workplace. Consideration should be given to parking resource and congestion of both vehicles and personnel entering locations at peak times.
     e. Catering/kitchen cleanliness due to increased demand on resources – Additional staff at sites which previously witnessed lower staff levels may place an additional strain on welfare facilities. These facilities should be risk assessed to ensure they can provide the relevant service levels whilst adhering to distancing guidelines.
  ii. Review start and finish times to avoid peak hours on public transport:
  1. Amending start and finish times may reduce risks of exposure as footfall on public transport reduces outside of peak hours.

- Shift and rotating workforces:
  i. Handling shift changes:
  1. Shift handovers:
     a. Consider virtual changeovers, or physically separate teams using different rooms, barriers and telephones to avoid unnecessary contact between different shifts.
     b. Consider process safety implications and risks from cold starts / restarting processes and ensure previous protocols are still valid.
  2. Sanitisation between shifts
     a. Confirm revised cleaning and sanitisation levels.

      b. Ensure these revised sanitisation levels and standards are communicated accurately to cleaning contractors and seek assurance that the revised standards can be reached and maintained.

      c. Consider removing 'hot bedding' where possible and ensure thorough sanitisation is undertaken if removal is not possible.

  ii. Transport to and from remote operations:

     1. Where company or third-party transport is provided to enable the workforce to reach a site e.g. helicopter travel to reach offshore facilities, occupancy should be planned prior to travel such that social distancing is achieved.

  iii. Rotating workforces travelling long distances:

     1. Employees may be arriving to start shift rotations having arrived from different regions or even countries. Consideration should be given to periods of isolation prior to shifts commencing.

     2. To avoid unnecessary transmission, avoid switching employees between different shift patterns.

  iv. Workforce rotation and separation of team:

     1. Research suggests that '4 day on, 10 day off' patterns help reduce spread of COVID-19 virus, by a) preventing all staff being in the office at the same time, b) staff are unlikely to be infectious within first four days of catching the virus, and c) staff are then provided 10 days out of the office during which to develop symptoms and recover. If combined with the below point about hot desking, this may also reduce the need for additional cleaning (and therefore reduces exposure of cleaning staff).

     2. Consider avoiding 'hot desking' to avoid the transmission of the virus via shared desk and equipment.

- Communications:
  - i. Delivering high level decisions and implementing the strategy:
    1. Ensure policy decisions made or amended are disseminated down throughout the organisation in a timely and effective manner. Failure to do so may lead to a breakdown in communication and expose employees to unnecessary risk.

- Management of change:
  - i. Ensuring changes made are documented and adequately risk assessed and changes are constantly updated to stay in line with current guidance and expectations See 'References and Information Sources'.

- IT/digitalisation
  - i. Ensure a cybersecurity risk assessment is undertaken to reflect the additional risks an organisation may be exposed to as a consequence of increased remote working.

ii.   Security implications and data privacy risks which may be increased due to remote working, include but are not limited to:

1. Printing
2. Cameras
3. Microphones
4. Social media
5. Website access

iii.   The results of the risk assessment should be carefully considered, a revised cybersecurity policy should be written and disseminated to staff.

iv.   Cybersecurity guidance should be distributed periodically as a reminder of good practice.

v.   Provide advice concerning SMART devices in the home e.g. smart speakers:

1. Consider disconnecting SMART devices whilst virtual meetings or telephone calls are taking place to avoid unnecessary intrusion or monitoring.

vi.   Guidance on the storage and destruction of sensitive material:

1. Confidential waste disposal is unlikely to be available for remote workers. Advice should be given to users on how to safely dispose of any unwanted printed matter.
2. Ref [CPNI Pandemic Security Behaviours](#)

vii.   Remote meeting options and etiquette:

1. Share best practice on how to conduct a virtual meeting.
2. Select the appropriate virtual software for the size and duration of the meeting.

viii.   Bandwidth:

1. Bandwidth may be compromised during larger virtual meetings.
2. Domestic bandwidth may be compromised as a result of several members of the same household working from home.

ix.   Provision of the correct equipment and ongoing equipment maintenance or upgrades for remote workers:

1. Ensure remote employees receive the correct equipment to be able to continue their day-to-day work.
2. Establish escalation procedures for IT issues e.g., replacing faulty equipment.

x.   DSRA and other risk assessments:

1. Consider undertaking DSRA for remote workers.
2. Ref - https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/index.htm

xi.   Implications to current IT resource:

1. Helpdesk resources may need to be reviewed due to increased remote working, cases of COVID-19 etc.

2. The workplace

- Social distancing protocols/revised building and room capacities:

    i. Desk set-up:

        1. Install screens to protect staff in receptions or other high-risk areas.

        2. Desk sharing/clear desk:

            a. IT accessories (mouse etc.) should be brought to the workplace by the employee and taken away at the end of the day.

            b. Policies should be communicated to employees prior to any return to work.

            c. Avoid hot desking where possible.

        3. Enhanced cleaning and sanitisation:

            a. Workspace should be sanitised after each shift to reduce exposure.

            b. Expectations should be communicated to cleaning contractors.

    ii. Meeting rooms:

        1. Maintaining social distancing:

            a. Desk space should be redesigned to maintain social distancing.

            b. 'Dos and don'ts' should be passed on to meeting attendees prior to meetings commencing.

            c. Expectations should be communicated to third-party attendees in advance of the meeting.

        2. Sanitisation supplies:

            a. Ensure locations are stocked with suitable sanitisation products for users.

    iii. Operational facilities:

        1. Maintaining social distancing for multiple-person jobs (e.g. maintenance) or where facilities restricted (e.g. down-rating headcount of emergency refuges):

            a. Consider the implications of down-rating facilities and whether they remain fit for purpose in emergency situations.

            b. Review headcount and reduce where conditions permit to conform with revised conditions.

        2. Consider providing designated routes, direction of travel (marked out by lines on the floor etc.) to avoid individuals/teams accidently coming into contact with each other, particularly in confined areas. Take account during job planning that this may entail longer travel times around the site.

- Ventilation standards:
    i. Ascertain whether ventilation (HVAC) uses recirculated or fresh air?
        1. Use window driven natural ventilation wherever possible.
        2. Consider keeping ventilation on 24/7 but at lower rates (this may have increased energy demand implications).
        3. Use lower staffing occupancy to increase social distancing.
        4. Check whether recirculated air HVAC systems can be used - depending on design and filters used.
    ii. Filters should continue to be changed as part of a good practice maintenance regime.
    iii. Reference Document - CIBSE Preventing COVID-19 Spreading In Buildings

- Inter-floor accessibility:
    i. Avoid elevator use whenever possible:
        1. If elevators must be used (disability, tall buildings, carrying goods, etc.), ensuring social distancing is maintained (single occupancy).
        2. Ensure elevator touch controls are sanitised after use.
        3. Provision of sanitiser for elevator users.
    ii. Where possible, make stairways single direction taking into consideration emergency access / egress.
    iii. Consideration should be given to potential impacts on existing fire escape routes if parts of the building are closed down or access and egress routes are modified.

- Legionella controls:
    i. Building water services may have been out of use for prolonged periods leading to stagnation and possible Legionella growth.
    ii. Consider updating both legionella and COSHH risk assessments and controls to be reviewed and updated accordingly.
    iii. Monitoring levels should be increased during periods of reduced occupancy.
    iv. Review the requirement to disinfect where there has been stagnation. See 'References and Information Sources'.
    v. Consider suitable RPE where cleaning of water systems is necessary.
    vi. Reference Document - HSE Legionella Risks During COVID-19

- Cleaning and sanitisation protocols:
  - i. Discussion and agree with contractor enhanced cleaning and sanitisation:
    1. Items to consider include but are not restricted to:
       a. Taps and wash facilities
       b. Toilets
       c. Door handles
       d. Stair handrails
       e. Lift control buttons
       f. Machinery controls
       g. IT equipment
  - ii. On-site contractor management:
    1. Define frequency of cleaning/sanitisation.
    2. Confirm existing contractors are capable of meeting increased expectations.
    3. Review contractor risk assessments to confirm compliance.
    4. Hold periodic reviews to help maintain prescribed standards and expectations.
  - iii. Increased stock levels to satisfy cleaning levels

- Visitor guidance, procedures and signage
  - i. Ensure visitors are engaged with and are aware of site enhancements.
  - ii. Communicate expectations in advance of visitors arriving on site.
  - iii. Ensure visitor levels remain within any revised occupancy levels and social distancing can be maintained.

- Catering:
  - i. Review catering capacity and ability:
    1. Is kitchen space reduced to accommodate social distancing?
    2. Can raw materials be sourced and delivered safely?
    3. Is there sufficient dining area to safely accommodate employees?
  - ii. Discussion with contractors on expectations:
    1. Can catering contractors fulfil requirements?
    2. Do they have clear risk assessments and safe systems of work?
  - iii. Management of dining:
    1. Establish dining protocols:
       a. Phased dining times.
    2. Consider closing canteens:
       a. If canteens are too small, consider relocating to larger occupancy rooms.

          b. If staff levels are low, consolidate dining into one area if safe to do so.

      3. Meals produced on site may be required to be taken away in disposable packaging where dining space is insufficient.

   iv. Food preparation standards:

      1. Ensure hygiene standards can be at least maintained.

   v. Consider removal of vending machines:

      1. Removing vending machines reduces the risk of transmission through contact.

   vi. Waste disposal:

      1. Previously routine waste may now have a different classification.

      2. Consult waste service provider to ascertain if there is any change to waste type (non-hazardous becomes hazardous).

- On-site amenities:

   i. Mail rooms:

      1. Consider quarantining mail for up to 48 hours or use suitable PPE/sanitiser if mail is urgent and requires immediate attention.

      2. Restrict or ban personal deliveries to the workplace.

   ii. Prayer rooms:

      1. Apply suitable guidance provided by relevant religions.

      2. Ref – C of E COVID-19 Guidance

   iii. Mother rooms:

      1. Consider converting larger rooms such as now unused meeting rooms into Mother rooms to ensure social distancing can be observed.

      2. Ensure any signage is updated to avoid unwanted intrusion.

   iv. Gyms:

      1. Gyms and recreational facilities should remain closed until legislation is revised.

   v. Smoking huts:

      1. If smoking huts are provided, ensure social distancing guidelines should be observed by users.

   vi. Shower facilities:

      1. Where provided, these should have clear guidelines for use and cleaning.

- Contractor/project management:

   i. Review and postpone non-essential contractor activity.

   ii. Revisit and risk assess essential contractor activity to ensure adequate arrangements have been made.

iii.   Where contractor work can be carried out, ensure:

1. Adequate social distancing in line with current guidelines.
2. Adequate stocks of PPE have been secured and the supply chain can cope with expected future demand.
3. Suitable PPE has been defined against foreseeable hazardous substances:
   a. Face fit tested Ref HSE Face Fit Test Guidance
   b. Availability:
      i. Confirm stock levels of suitable PPE.
      ii. Organisations have a duty of care to ensure suitable PPE is available for those working on site
   c. Seek assurances that disposable PPE will be disposed of in the prescribed manner e.g. hazardous waste licence in place where applicable, and reusable PPE is identified and cleaned to a defined standard.
4. Identify amenity requirements for contractors:
   a. Determine suitable areas and allocate accordingly observing current legislation.
   b. Communicate expectations to contractors during a pre-task safety briefing.
   c. Conduct ongoing audits during contractor activity to ensure compliance.
   d. Contractor supervision & inspection is observed in a safe manner.

- Logistics arrangements:

i.   Collection and delivery points:

1. Revise collection and delivery points if required to maintain social distancing.

ii.   Raw materials:

1. Consider supply chain arrangements for raw materials arriving on-site.
2. Relay increased security protocols to ensure consignments are booked in ahead of arrival.
3. Review risk assessments of contractors (road, rail, maritime) to ensure suitable mitigation measures have been implemented where necessary.
4. Consider quarantine arrangements where applicable.

iii.   Miscellaneous deliveries:

1. Reduce to essential deliveries only.
2. Adhere to the same security arrangements as raw materials.

iv.   Finished goods leaving site:

1. Relay increased security protocols to ensure consignments are booked in ahead of arrival and that any items due for dispatch are booked in at the receiving location in line with third-party requirements.

2. Review risk assessments of contractors (road, rail, maritime) to ensure suitable mitigation measures have been implemented where necessary.

3. Health and safety management

- PPE protocols:

    i. PPE required for normal operations should still be used, but some additional COVID-19 precautions/controls including PPE may be appropriate. Visors with respect to COVID-19 PPE are mainly used in healthcare settings where aerosol generating procedures (AGP) risk the spread of droplets. They may also be advised in customer facing roles, such as Retail where there may be a risk of accidental or deliberate aerosol generation e.g. spitting.

- Provision and selection of a testing regime (where required) or review of third-party testing:

    i. Employees

    ii. Contractors

    iii. Visitors

- Sickness/illness reporting, notification and declaration procedures:

    i. Consider whether a case of coronavirus at the workplace should be reported to relevant authorities e.g. RIDDOR reporting.

    ii. Ref - HSE COVID-19 RIDDOR Reporting

- Managing COVID-19 on-site:

    i. Individual organisations should consider management of onsite cases of COVID-19. Consideration should include but not be limited to:

        1. Securing

        2. Detection

        3. PPE

        4. Isolation

        5. Response and evacuation planning (e.g. role of first aid)

4. People and culture

- Leadership – Overambitious expectation/risk assessment to include team members. See BOHS Guidance in 'References & Information Sources'.
  - i. Ensure management expectation of the numbers of people likely to be permitted to return to work and when they will be able to return to work are achievable and in line with expectation. Any risk assessment should be undertaken by a team including personnel who have knowledge of the task.
  - ii. Planning.
  - iii. Audit of protocols and management review (continuous improvement).

- Identification and management of vulnerable groups:
  - i. Vulnerable groups should be identified as soon as possible.
  - ii. Discuss with vulnerable groups how organisations can help them to continue working in a safe environment wherever possible.
  - iii. Periodic reviews in line with changing legislation.

- Managing mental health:
  - i. Workplace-based staff:
    1. Workplace staff may feel increasingly vulnerable.
    2. Engage with staff and encourage conversation as they may be feeling isolated from colleagues who are now working remotely.
    3. There may also be concerns regarding job security in view of the economic impact of COVID-19 on the energy sector. This should be handled truthfully, but sensitively (see HR provision below).
  - ii. Remote staff:
    1. Stick to daily routines.
    2. Stay in touch with work colleagues, friends and families to avoid feelings of isolation.
    3. Keep active.
    4. Maintain a healthy diet.
  - iii. Anticipate and acknowledge distress:
    1. Feeling vulnerable is normal.
    2. Avoid increasing habits which may be harmful such as smoking and increased alcohol levels.
  - iv. Ref - https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you/

- Values and behaviours:
  - i. Time management:
    1. Engage with remote staff to ensure expectations are positively reinforced.

    ii.   Promoting an organisation:

        1. Team meetings:

            a. Update staff on current regulations.

            b. Encourage staff to share learnings.

            c. Reassure staff that support is in place if required.

        2. Communications from business leaders:

            a. Share strategy developments with staff.

        3. Behavioural safety around COVID-19:

            a. Discourage speculation and encourage resourcing information from reputable sources. Rumour and speculation can fuel anxiety. Having access to good quality information about the virus can help you feel more in control.

    iii.   Specialist advice:

        1. Engage with health managers and specialists to explain the risks in an objective way to reassure staff and get engagement for development of safe systems of work.

- Human resource provision:

    i.   Handling staffing issues (fatalities/injuries/fatigue/furlough/redundancies).

    ii.   Willingness to work (employer/employee rights).

    iii.   Contract review:

        1. Ensure any amendments to work arrangements are suitably addressed in contracts of employment.

    iv.   Recruitment/new starters/leavers:

        1. Interviews:

            a. Remote.

            b. Office-based.

        2. Selection.

        3. Induction.

        4. Return to work interviews.

        5. Exit interviews

5. Operational readiness

- Site facilities – Real estate to confirm and building and infrastructure requirements are in place:
  i. Engagement with landlords and other building users as appropriate.
  ii. Medical support to workers.
  iii. Ensuring contractor staff are aware of arrangements.
  iv. Support for persons with disabilities.
  v. Creation of scenario planning to address, for example:
     1. Protocols where a colleague contracts the virus.
     2. Requirements to move to a different site.

- Line managers to engage in 1:1 discussions with staff prior to returning to site to confirm they are ready for the 'new normal':
  i. Identify persons who may be best to remain at home e.g. if caring for elderly relatives.

6. References and information sources

British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS)

http://www.bohs.org/coronavirus-hub/

Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI)

https://www.cpni.gov.uk/system/files/documents/a3/4e/Pandemic%20Security%20Behaviours%20v4.pdf

Church of England

https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches

European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID)

www.escmid.org/fileadmin/src/media/PDFs/3Research_Projects/ESGLI/ESGLI_GUIDANCE_FOR_MANAGING_LEGIONELLA_IN_BUILDING_WATER_SYSTEMS_DURING_THE_COVID-19_PANDEMIC_20200418_v02.00.pdf

Health & Safety Executive (HSE)

https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm

Mind

https://www.mind.org.uk/coronavirus-we-are-here-for-you/

Miscellaneous

COVID-19 Return to working OH&S guidance, Ian Travers

Society of Occupational Medicine (SoM)

https://www.som.org.uk/coronavirus-resources.php

UK Government

https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus

Please email any feedback, comments or enquiries relating to this document to covidguidance@energyinst.org