

Introduction

Throughout the last few months, we have worked with a wide variety of organisations and businesses during the Coronavirus pandemic, notably manufacturing organisations, the construction industry, trade's businesses, the NHS and social care sector and more recently businesses who are preparing to return to work.

This has included COVID-19 screening checklists, socially distanced training for essential workers, developing live streamed training, advice on PPE, face fit testing, specific advice for those working in COVID-19 positive environments, advice on home working including mental health and COVID-19 audits to test the effectiveness of the measures employers have put in place.

This information is based on our experiences, that which the law requires employers to do, publications from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Government, industry guidance and similar.

COVID-19

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. When returning to work, you must be aware of the primary hazards from exposure to the Coronavirus (that causes the Covid-19 illness) and ensure control measures are in place to prevent the transmission of infection and illness within the workplace.

Some people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Others can develop serious illness.

Coronaviruses are well known to be particularly resilient in terms of where they can survive. And researchers are now beginning to understand more about how this affects the spread of the new coronavirus. When returning to work, you must be aware of the primary hazards from exposure to the Coronavirus that causes the Covid-19 illness and ensure control measures are in place to prevent the transmission of infection and illness.

Where Coronavirus Lives

The question of 'how long does coronavirus survive on different surfaces' is increasingly something we are asked. What we do know is that the virus spreads mainly through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone with the virus talks, coughs, or sneezes near you and the droplets land on you.

Specifically, with regard to surfaces there have been a number of recent published studies which provide a general indication of how long SARS-COV-2 can survive at room temperature in laboratory conditions. The viability of the virus due to environmental and other factors still isn't known.

- Plastic 7-10 days
- Stainless steel 3 – 7 days
- Copper 4 hours
- Paper up to 4 days
- Glass up to 4 days
- Cardboard 24 hours
- Wood up to 2 days

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What cleaning materials are effective?

We are regularly asked about cleaning products/sanitizers and which ones who killed virus. The simple answer is to focus less on the brand name and more on the active ingredients within the product. The main ingredients to look for in your disinfectants are:

- Soap, running water water, together with a good handwashing technique and disposable paper towels
- Sodium hypochlorite 0.1 to 0.5 % (which is commonly found in products containing bleach)
- Antibacterial / antiviral wipes for cleaning hard surfaces such as a keyboard, mouse, mobiles phones etc

What MUST you do?

You must carry out a risk assessment and take reasonable steps to protect people from harm, consider:

- What work activities could result in exposure to the virus?
- Who might be affected (employees, visitors, customers, contractors, people in more vulnerable groups)?
- Eliminate the risk if you can (for example by continuing to work from home)
- If the risk cannot be eliminated it must be controlled

You should also:

- Share your findings with employees and others who might require this information
- Provide information, instruction and training where required
- Ensure you have robust reporting procedures in place for any potential exposure to COVID-19
- Ensure statutory reporting under RIDDOR if necessary
- Consider the need for personal protective equipment
- Review fire risk assessments if you have made changes to layout of your premises
- Update COSHH assessments if you have introduced new chemicals or cleaning regimes in the workplace
- Consider the mental health of employees who may be feeling anxious for different reasons

Government Guidance

On the 11th May, the government produced a series of eight guides covering a range of different workplaces to ensure they are as safe as possible, in some a number of different guides might apply to the same business, if for example you have office premises, operate vehicles and have warehouse facilities:

- Construction and other outdoor work
- Factories, plants and warehouses
- Labs and research facilities
- Offices and contact centres
- Other people's homes
- Restaurants offering takeaway or delivery
- Shops and branches
- Vehicles (people who work from or in vehicles)

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Working Safely during Coronavirus

This guidance on working safely can be found at [Industry Specific Guidance Documents](#). This will help you ensure you do everything right when preparing the workplace for staff to return.

The Government are also asking that all employers display the 'COVID-19 Secure in 2020' poster which confirms you have complied with the five essential steps for safer working together:

- We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and shared our findings
- We have cleaning, hand washing and hygiene procedures in place in line with guidance
- We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home
- We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace
- Where people cannot be 2m apart we have done everything practical to manage the transmission risk

Download the [Poster](#)

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What would we like you to do?

Review the checklist and answer the questions.

This checklist is designed to prompt you to consider the existing controls you have in place and those that you might need to consider as employees return to work to keep everyone safe and ensure you are complying with your legal duties during the coronavirus pandemic.

- Not every question will be relevant, so feel free to put N/A in the column if the question does not apply to your operation.
- The checklist itself is not a risk assessment however, it asks some important questions that relate not only to coronavirus but also other areas of health and safety
- It will help inform its content and we've created a generic risk assessment which covers a number of common hazards associated with coronavirus which we've saved as a word document so you can add to it and make it your own.

Next Steps

- 1) Complete the checklist
- 2) Book in with one of our consultants who can try to answer any questions you might have, including advice on:
 - COVID-19 screening questionnaires
 - Supporting you complete your risk assessment
 - Social distancing
 - Current HSE and Resuscitation Council first aid guidance
 - RIDDOR reporting
 - Staff training (e.g. handwashing, first aid fire marshal, evacuation chairs)
 - Employee's mental health
 - COVID-19 audits to check the effectiveness of the control you have put in place
- 3) Complete your risk assessment (we can provide you with a template)
- 4) Consult with staff / others
- 5) Print the poster and display it at your workplace

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Working Safely Checklist

Name			Signature		
Company name			Date		
Is working from home utilised where possible with only essential work being completed at business premises?	Yes	No	N/A		
Are extremely vulnerable (or those living with), clinically vulnerable (pregnancy) encouraged to stay at home and isolate?	Yes	No	N/A		
Are employees / visitors required to confirm positive self-isolation compliance each day on arrival to premises?	Yes	No	N/A		
Are there any steps you can take to eliminate the risk (e.g. move aspect of business on-line)?	Yes	No	N/A		
Are those travelling to work able to do so avoiding the need to use public transport?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you comply with social distancing guidelines keeping people 2m apart at all times throughout the working day?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you facilitate the movement of 'people' through your premises maintaining 2m at all times	Yes	No	N/A		
Where social distancing cannot be maintained do you have access to screens or barriers?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you reduce activity time, keeping it as short as possible?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you change the way people work (e.g. back to back or side to side rather than face to face)?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you reduce the number of people in the workplace (e.g. by working in teams or fixed shift patterns)?	Yes	No	N/A		
Will changes to employees work patterns require others being retrained or upskilled?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you easily increase the frequency of handwashing?	Yes	No	N/A		
Do employees and others know how to effectively wash their hands? (e.g. posters on display/training)?	Yes	No	N/A		
Do you need to provide alcohol gel for employees / visitors / contractors / off site workers?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you easily increase the frequency of cleaning?	Yes	No	N/A		
Do you have ready access to suitable cleaning materials (70% plus alcohol, anti-bacterial/antiviral wipes and similar)	Yes	No	N/A		
Do you have ready access to any PPE that might be required (gloves, apron's, visors, masks)?	Yes	No	N/A		
If tight fitting respiratory protective equipment is being provided have employees been 'fit tested'?	Yes	No	N/A		
Do you have an adequate number of first aiders in line with current revised HSE guidance?	Yes	No	N/A		
Do you have an adequate number of fire marshals / MHFA / staff trained to support those where is a PEEP / BEEP?	Yes	No	N/A		
Have first aiders received updated Covid-19 advice on resuscitation?	Yes	No	N/A		
Can you easily control access to the site / premises?	Yes	No	N/A		
Are only necessary persons permitted on site?	Yes	No	N/A		

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Do you need to update your fire risk assessment? (e.g. following changes to the layout of the workplace)?	Yes	No	N/A
Do you need to update COSHH assessment? (e.g. following the introduction of new cleaning products or regimes)?	Yes	No	N/A
Do any other assessments need updating (e.g. DSE, new and expectant mothers)?	Yes	No	N/A
Is any statutory servicing, maintenance or inspection needed before returning to work (hoists, legionella, fire etc.)?	Yes	No	N/A

Which of the following groups do you need to consider in your risk assessment?		
Employees	Yes	No
Visitors / members of the public	Yes	No
Employees in vulnerable groups	Yes	No
Others in vulnerable groups	Yes	No
Contractors	Yes	No
Children	Yes	No

Remember:

1. Work from home, if you can

All reasonable steps should be taken by employers to help people work from home. But for those who cannot work from home and whose workplace has not been told to close, the message is clear: you should go to work. Staff should speak to their employer about when their workplace will open.

2. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with workers or trade unions

This guidance operates within current health and safety employment and equalities legislation and employers will need to carry out COVID-19 risk assessments in consultation with their workers or trade unions, to establish what guidelines to put in place. If possible, employers should publish the results of their risk assessments on their website and we expect all businesses with over 50 employees to do so.

3. Maintain 2 metres social distancing, wherever possible

Employers should re-design workspaces to maintain 2 metre distances between people by staggering start times, creating one-way walk-throughs, opening more entrances and exits, or changing seating layouts in break rooms.

4. Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage transmission risk

Employers should look into putting barriers in shared spaces, creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another, or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other.

5. Reinforcing cleaning processes

Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles and keyboards. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points.

A downloadable notice is included in the documents, which employers should display in their workplaces to show their employees, customers and other visitors to their workplace, that they have followed this guidance.

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