CDC
Investment works

Guidance

Returning to the workplace during COVID-19: Occupational health and safety considerations

In association with

RSK

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Acknowledgement

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01

Scope and purpose

The gradual relaxation of lockdown measures enforced after the COVID-19 pandemic do not signal a return to 'business as usual' for most companies. Instead, they mark a transition to a new way of doing business, by confronting a set of previously unencountered challenges.

This includes the pressing need to ensure workers (and customers) are safe in newly re-opened workplaces, and to take further preparations to respond to difficult economic conditions and ongoing uncertainty about the trajectory and consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak.

CDC has produced two separate, but related, guidance notes to help companies preparing to return to work to address the dual challenges of anticipating and managing labour-related aspects and, while COVID-19 remains prevalent, offering guidance on the best approach to ensure occupational health and safety.

The scope of this note is intended to provide general and sector-specific guidance on COVID-19 hazards and controls. Its purpose is to provide information and advice to employers, employees and others potentially affected by COVID-19, and who may need to implement additional health and safety controls in their workplace.

This guidance note should be read alongside the interim guidance note: Returning to the workplace during COVID-19: Labour and workforce considerations.

02

Occupational Health and Safety

Individual employers will each face a different set of challenges when returning to work, conditional on national easing and policy measures, as well as broader financial and economic influences. The following factors will play a significant role in determining how companies plan the return to work and the potential workforce implications:

- **Easing of lockdowns and other restrictions:** the status of national and local laws restricting certain business activities remain one of the most important determinants of whether companies can restart operations. Other restrictions, such as curfews, public transportation restrictions or social distancing measures, will determine if workers can physically return to work and whether – or how – they can do so safely.
- **Employment and OHS legislation:** employee-specific law should be carefully analysed to determine how it affects the parameters of a return to work. Although dependent on the jurisdiction in which the company operates, laws may permit workers to refuse unsafe work, require employee consent for unpaid leave, or impose procedural requirements when modifying employment contracts. Some jurisdictions have implemented COVID-19-specific legislation (for instance, prohibiting COVID-19-related dismissals), while others have adopted deregulatory strategies to promote employment.

The return to work context is creating some situations where the financial and economic imperatives of re-starting some businesses means that employers, and their employees, are being asked to collectively manage the occupational health risks in relation to COVID-19. This note provides guidance to companies on health and safety considerations as they prepare to return to work.

This note therefore presents some consistent approaches to OHS risk assessment, and a number of emerging mitigation and controls measures for avoiding the spread of COVID-19 as a result of going to work. However, it is by no means exhaustive, and there will be some measures which are not practical or implementable in certain situations.

It has been designed to be an entry point to this topic and provide some anchoring principles and practical solutions which companies and employers can use in to order to start creating workplace settings which have considered the key occupational health and safety challenges.

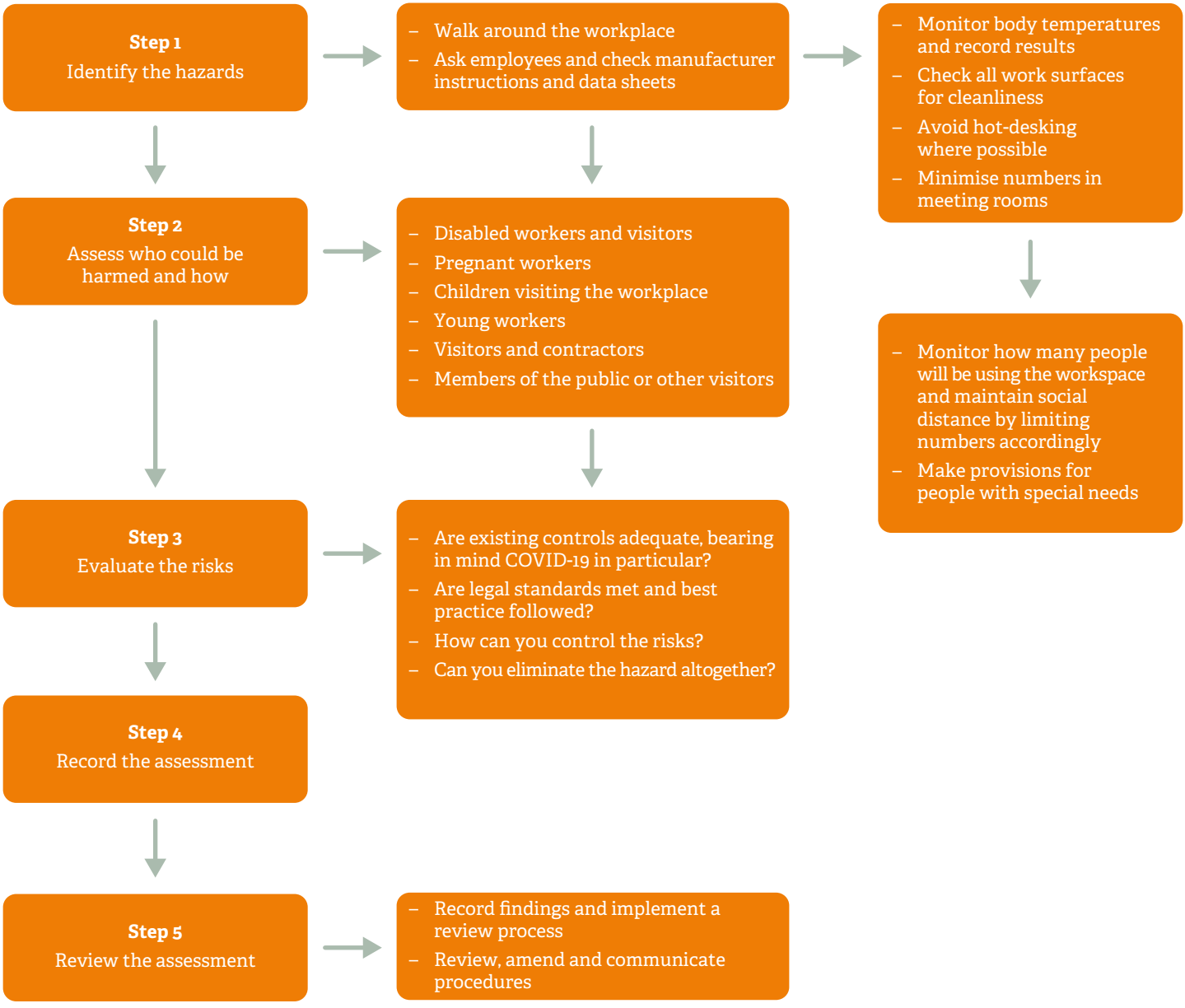
03

Return to work planning

This section provides a range of considerations for companies where work resumption is planned or underway.

Risk assessment should follow the flow chart below, which includes all stages of the decision-making process. Clear and regular employee communication – with the close involvement of any Human Resources (HR) function – will be at the heart of successful work resumption planning, as well as the ongoing management of teams that continue to work remotely.

Risk assessment flow chart



3.1 Changing workplace layouts to limit the potential for cross-contamination

While homeworking will continue for some, the greatest challenge lies in how to adapt usual working environments such as offices, sites and open spaces. This could involve a combination of short-term fixes aimed at boosting worker confidence, reducing the number of staff in the office, workplace or site at any one time and longer-term design upgrades and modifications that put hygiene at the heart of workplace planning.

In the short-term, workplace layouts should be changed based on current social distancing measures, although employers have the opportunity to transform existing premises into places where social distancing rules determined by government guidance can continue to be observed.

With health and safety considerations paramount, workplaces with high-density desk layouts can no longer be occupied at the same levels, meaning processes such as employee rotas may be introduced where safe to do so.

Quick fixes such as 'sneeze screens' around desks do not address the need to maintain good hygiene in common areas. Therefore, new cleaning processes and hygiene standards will need to be implemented and communicated to all workers.

Employers should consider fewer fixed desks in favour of flexible working spaces which can be used for a variety of tasks. Introducing new working areas devoted to collaboration, for example formal meeting rooms or relaxed seating areas, along with embracing new technologies can allow for greater flexibility and increase efficiencies in the way people work.

3.2 Shift patterns and working hours, commuting and travel to work

One of several proposed measures for allowing employees to safely return to the workplace is to introduce staggered shifts or hours. This would reduce the likelihood of large numbers of people travelling at peak times and therefore, hopefully, reduce the risk of infection.

Another measure is to maintain the same people working in each designated shift, and ensuring that workers do not rotate into other shift groups. In some cases, it may be helpful for business continuity reasons to divide specific teams or functions in two, with half working at home and half in the workplace.

Staggered working hours offer workers some discretion, within prescribed limits, in determining the time when they start and finish work. However, once those times have been chosen and agreed with the employer, they should remain unchanged, making them different from flexitime working agreements. Employers should consider staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact of those who may be particularly vulnerable. Staggered shifts or hours can help ease congestion on public transport and traffic at peak hours, as well as preventing large groups of people arriving and leaving organisations at the same time of day. To reduce the risk of large groups gathering at lunchtime, morning or afternoon breaks, employees may prefer to bring their lunch from home to avoid using company facilities.

Every employee should be encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own risks of infection when it comes to safely entering and exiting the workplace. Employers have a duty to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety. This means thinking about the risks employees face and doing everything reasonably practicable to minimise them, while recognising that no-one can eliminate infection risk.

Employers may also consider providing additional parking or facilities such as cycle racks to help people walk, run or cycle to work where possible. It may also be necessary to define alternative entry and exit points, or revise existing entry processes (for example deactivating turnstiles in favour of showing passes to security personnel at a distance).

3.3 Security arrangements and emergency response

COVID-19 has the potential to severely impact organisations by limiting access to essential internal and external employees, materials, equipment, and services. Such impacts can negatively affect both the organisation's incoming supply chain and its customers. As more is understood about the coronavirus, organisations will need to continually evaluate its impact, both on the existing business and the business continuity response plan.

With the current prevalence of COVID-19, first aid skills and training are vitally important. In the event of a first aid incident, employees providing assistance to others should pay attention to current guidance and good practice. Particularly, strict sanitation measures should be taken immediately afterwards including washing hands and disposing of used Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

There is always a risk of contamination when approaching a casualty – especially when the responder may have to get close to assess what is wrong or to check their breathing. It is always important to be aware of the risks of cross-contamination.

In line with World Health Organisation (WHO) advice, make sure you wash your hands or use an alcohol gel, before and after treating a casualty. Responders should also avoid coughing or sneezing over a casualty while they are being treated.

Controllers of premises and businesses must review all emergency arrangements to ensure the impact of COVID-19 has been fully assessed. Any changes to legally-required documents and safety management arrangements should be completed and communicated. This includes a COVID-19-specific health and safety induction, use of hand sanitisers, protective gloves (nitrile or other similar type) and facemasks (where necessary) and completion of temperature checks, including documenting results and actions.

3.4 Cleaning regimes, waste recycling and decontamination

The coronavirus can be defeated by good hygiene, cleaning and disinfecting.

To reduce the risk of infection, more frequent cleaning is recommended in all properties and workplaces, including those with no confirmed cases of COVID-19. When cleaning, extra attention should be given to 'high-touch' surfaces, such as door handles and light switches. If there has been a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in a property or workplace, it is recommended that the property or workplace is deep-cleaned and disinfected to reduce the risk of transmission to other people.

Once cleaning is complete, immediately remove any PPE such as gowns, gloves, or masks, and dispose of them or wash accordingly. Remember to wash hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds afterwards.

3.5 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) selection and maintenance

In the context of COVID-19, PPE includes gloves, medical or surgical facemasks, goggles, face shield, and gowns, as well as items for specific procedures such as filtering facepiece respirators (Ideally, this will be facemasks that meet N95 or FFP2 or FFP3 standard or equivalent) and aprons.

Based on current evidence, the coronavirus is transmitted between people through close contact and respiratory droplets. Airborne transmission may occur during aerosol-generating procedures and support treatments. Employers should refer to the WHO recommendations on airborne transmission precautions.

PPE should be used in combination with administrative and engineering controls. The use of PPE should be based on the setting, target audience, risk of exposure (e.g. type of activity) and the transmission dynamics of COVID-19 (e.g. contact, droplet, or aerosol). The overuse or misuse of PPE will have a further impact on supply shortages.

Employers are advised, while restocking supplies, to take a moment to check expiration dates.

3.6 PPE use in the workplace

PPE can protect the user against health or safety risks at work. Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

Due to the effect on the supply-chain, PPE may be difficult to obtain or there may be long periods of time for delivery. Also, it may not be possible to obtain PPE which fully conforms to international standards. Simple steps can be made to minimise the risk of infection. For example, face coverings can be in the form of a scarf worn across the nose and mouth, any type of glove will prevent skin contact on surfaces or other objects such as IT equipment, and pocket-size personal hand sanitizers can be provided for frequent use. These are simple solutions that can be applied quickly and effectively.

Other controls should be considered first before the use of PPE, including working from home and maintaining a suitable social distance from each other in the workplace where possible. The risks from COVID-19 should initially be managed through social distancing, physical barriers, hygiene (encouraging hand washing and extensive cleaning of surfaces) and using fixed teams or partnering, before additionally considering the use of PPE such as face coverings and gloves as determined by the organisation's risk assessment.

The exception is for clinical settings, such as hospitals, or a small handful of other roles such as first responders. Should the risk assessment determine that PPE is required, you should provide this PPE to your workers. Key principles on the use of PPE are as follows;

- PPE should fit properly, and employees should be suitably instructed in how to wear, clean, use, maintain, store and dispose of it.
- Masks may carry some risks if not used properly. Where masks are used, is very important to ensure safe and proper use, care and disposal.
- Face coverings should not be viewed as a replacement for other ways of managing risk, such as social distancing, and only an additional control measure.
- Develop a policy on wearing a mask or a face covering in line with national or local guidance.

Employers should support and train their workers in using face coverings safely should they choose to wear one. This includes:

- enabling workers to wash their hands thoroughly before putting on a face covering, and after removing it;
- encouraging workers to avoid touching their face or face covering, as it could contaminate them with germs from their hands - reminding them to change the face covering if it becomes damp or after touching it; and
- requesting that face coverings are replaced daily. If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions; if not washable, dispose of it carefully by using standard waste management procedures.

3.7 Compliance with statutory inspections and legislative requirements (legionella, asbestos, fire safety, gas safety, lifting operations and lifting equipment, etc.)

There should be no relaxation on the duty-holder's responsibility to apply good industry practice when maintaining work equipment. While supply chain delays may make it more difficult to carry out thorough examinations, written schemes of examination and statutory inspections, this should be considered as an exception to usual good practice, rather than a new 'normal'.

If maintenance intervention dates are exceeded, and the decision is made to keep a certain asset or system running, it is very important to document the risk and any additional actions taken to mitigate this risk.

When assessing water systems, one of the first things to consider is the risk of stagnation and bacteria present in water tap outlets. To prevent this, tap outlets should be flushed on a regular basis.

The same maintenance considerations should be applied to heating and cooling systems. Building owners should keep equipment operating and maintained at regular intervals, or as and when there is a requirement for a heating or cooling environment or specific workspace.

Work personnel should be consulted and informed on preparations to return to the workplace, and given assurances of their safety upon their return. It is advised to share the process of and results from risk assessment with employees, providing an opportunity to query and clarify as required.

Employees and personnel should be instructed on the circumstances in which they should not return to work if they show COVID-19 symptoms, and guidance on when they should be self-isolating in line with local and regional legal requirements and guidelines.

Workers should receive guidance on how to travel safely to workplaces, such as to avoid public transport where possible, or if not possible, maintaining social distancing and wearing a face covering.

At the workplace, workers should be given clear instructions and guidance on social distancing, including the use of stairs, lifts and sanitary conveniences. Guidance should also be made available to inbound delivery drivers or safety critical visitors on arrival, making use of signage, visual aids, or by phone, on the website, by email.

Workplaces should establish host responsibilities relating to COVID-19, starting from the premise of limiting interactions between staff and visitors and setting up the facilities so that social distancing can be maintained. Other considerations should be as follows;

- providing basic health information (travel locations, existing health problems, contact groups)
- providing any necessary training for workers acting as hosts for visitors
- reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact
- coordination with other occupiers for those working in facilities shared with other businesses, including landlords and other tenants.

3.8 Tracking cases of COVID-19 in the workforce

WHO guidance recommends that workers should not attend the workplace if they have COVID-19 symptoms such as a high temperature, a new continuous cough, a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste. Systems should be put in place (in line with regional legal requirements and guidance for self-isolating) for employees to inform their organisation that they are displaying symptoms and will not be attending work for the agreed isolation period. They should also inform the organisation of any persons in the workplace they have been in close contact with.

Organisations should have a plan to track persons that have been working in close contact to those displaying symptoms, while acknowledging that there may be difficulties in accessing virus test.

Where business premises have close proximity to the general public, risk assessments should consider control measures that identify members of the public that have symptoms (such as a high temperature), by monitoring or means of a questionnaire prior to entry, and to request them to leave the premises if they have symptoms. The risk assessment should also consider how visitors and members of the public can maximise social distancing; maintain hand washing or sanitisation; and consider whether customers or members of the public should be required to wear face coverings.

It is acknowledged that there may be a workplace stigma associated with a positive test for COVID-19 and this is covered in the interim guidance note: Returning to the workplace during COVID-19: Labour and workforce considerations.

3.9 Suggestions on notices and signage

Aside from the legislation and guidance relating to COVID-19, employers should ensure they are taking all necessary steps to protect employees in any event. All employers have health and safety obligations to keep employees informed about health risks that may arise in carrying out their duties and to ensure that working practices do not create undue risks to employees.

Employers should keep all employees updated on actions being taken to reduce the risk of exposure in the workplace and ensure employees who are in a vulnerable group (including. those with pre-existing medical conditions, pregnant woman, elderly people or malnourished people) are strongly advised to work from home wherever possible and follow social distancing guidance where working from home doesn't continue to be feasible.

Employees in an extremely vulnerable group (i.e. anyone who has had an organ transplant, been treated for cancer, has severe lung conditions) should be shielded and supported to stay at home if possible. The employer should ensure employee contact numbers and emergency contact details are up to date by using notices and signs around the work environment. Employers should also ensure managers are able to spot symptoms of COVID-19 and are clear on any communications, relevant processes and procedures, including sickness reporting and sick pay.

Employers should make clear information on appropriate places to wash hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) available, along with encouraging all employees to use hand sanitisers regularly. Illustrations are a good way of sharing information and are easy to implement. Employers should place visible signs in the workplace reminding employees not to attend work if they have a fever or cough, and to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands (poster and leaflet materials can be used).

3.10 Sharing rest facilities and arrangements for breaks and refreshments

Employers have a general duty to provide a safe workplace for employees. Local and WHO guidance on workplace safety measures should be taken into account during the pandemic. Complying with applicable guidance on workplace safety issues will help minimise risk and maintain safe working environments.

Implementing social distancing measures are important in maintaining safe workplaces. While specific social distancing practices will vary depending on the type of workplace, or as required by public health agencies or governmental orders, examples of good practice when providing rest facilities and arrangements for breaks and refreshments in the workplace could include:

- Closing lunchrooms or staggering lunch and break times with other employees;
- Increased the frequency of workplace cleaning;
- Providing hand sanitiser stations;
- Requiring the use of face masks if social distancing is a challenge;
- Removing chairs from rest facilities to limit numbers and ensure employees can sit apart in line with government guidelines;
- Leaving a buffer between break times and lunch times to avoid overlap between two or more groups and allow time for cleaning; and
- Installing social distancing decals on the floors of any shared spaces in the workplace.

3.11 Managing contractors and the safety of others

Operating within the 'new normal' will be challenging when working with contractors and external suppliers. Potential issues such as personnel movement between multiple sites, loss of visibility over contractors on site, confusion over safety protocols and supplier status could severely inhibit day-to-day operations.

Employers can implement simple COVID-19 contractor control through medical screening tracking, daily temperature checks, limited numbers of people in vehicles, and good basic hygiene standards.

With numerous companies looking to re-open operations and re-examine the feasibility and risks of their existing contractor and supplier relationships, there are key considerations to assess. Possible steps include managing shift patterns (to minimise the numbers of workers on site and to enable workers to commute off-peak), changing works programmes with a view to preventing trades working too close to each other and altering the location of rest areas.

Employers should assess and identify the information they need to collect from contractors and suppliers to best manage and mitigate COVID-19 risk exposures. Effective contractor safety is not just limited to supplier document management, but also entails visibility into site access, contact tracing and building a holistic contractor and supplier onboarding and evaluation program.

Change management aimed at maintaining and reinforcing desired behaviours can be achieved through communication, training and awareness.

3.12 Review of appropriate health and safety polices

Employers should develop a policy outlining its plan to deal with a COVID-19 outbreak among its workforce and develop and implement clear and concise procedures for implementing the policy.

In summary, every business will need to review their policies and procedures to ensure COVID-19 is a key issue for all employees. New procedures and creative solutions should be developed to operate in a safe way and communicated to all employees, contractors, visitors and third parties.

04

Conducting a workplace risk assessment

The General COVID-19 Risk Assessment in this section can be adapted to suit the workplace environment, activities and industry of your organisation. It should be added to and be adapted for the purpose of making it specific to your workplace and hazards. A suitable and sufficient risk assessment should follow the simple process of the 'Five steps to risk assessment':

- **Identify the hazards (a hazard is something with the potential to cause harm)**
  - Walk around the workplace
  - Ask employees
  - Check manufacturers' instructions, data sheets etc.
- **Assess who could be harmed and how. Consider groups who may be especially at risk:**
  - Disabled, pregnant workers, foreign workers
  - Children or young workers
  - Visitors and contractors
  - Members of the public
- **Evaluate the risks (and identify suitable controls to reduce risks to an acceptable level). Consider severity, frequency and likelihood:**
  - Are existing controls adequate?
  - Are legal standards met and best practice followed?
  - How can you control the risks?
  - Can you eliminate the hazard altogether?
  - Organise the work (i.e. use barriers, permits to work, PPE)
- **Record the risk assessment. Organisations must determine the most significant findings, which may include:**
  - The group most at risk
  - The adequacy of existing controls
  - Short-term and long-term measures
  - The extent of the risk
  - Further actions necessary
- **Review the risk assessment frequently. The assessment must be reviewed when:**
  - It is believed to be no longer valid
  - There has been a significant change

An example risk assessment template can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 features a checklist to help identify the key measures of the risk assessment process.

05

Sector-specific considerations

This section explores some of the specific challenges – and potential responses – for employers managing a return to work in the following sectors: infrastructure and real estate, construction, agribusiness, financial services, manufacturing, and retail/business to consumer (B2C) services.

Small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) are facing an unprecedented disruption due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Due to the ongoing changes and updates in guidance and restrictions it is essential that informed decisions about implementing controls are considered carefully as they will involve additional resource, financial input and ongoing maintenance which in some instances SME's do not have. Simple cost-effective steps can be implemented immediately and still allow for stringent but realistic control measures, including the following:

- Simple risk assessment process
- Washing your hands frequently and properly
- Maintain social distancing by displaying signs (these can be home-made or made by employees to reduce cost)
- Cover your mouth (with your arm) when coughing or sneezing
- Use simple face coverings
- Avoid close contact with those who may already be infected

Other feasible interventions should be taken simultaneously i.e. staying at home if sick, reducing large gatherings, promoting hand washing and ensuring soap distribution.

5.1 Infrastructure and real estate

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
Lockdowns may have led to significant delays in infrastructure projects and *force majeure* may have been called.	Following significant delays on a project, there may be increased pressure on working hours and potential for excessive overtime. Contractors may be keen to make up for delays during the lockdown, workers may also be willing to work longer hours to make up for lost wages.	Ensure robust systems are in place for monitoring OHS legislation onsite to ensuring ongoing compliance. Where national laws on working hours have been relaxed as a government response to COVID-19, general safety principles should not be compromised. Careful planning and re-assessment of projects will be needed to ensure timescales are realistic, safety systems can be maintained, and corners are not cut to finish work tasks.
A high reliance on (sub)contractors for both service and labour provision.	Large numbers of sub-contractors can hinder workforce visibility. Also, the transient and changing nature of construction sites means the use of subcontractors and the composition of the workforce is subject to ongoing change. This can make it harder to ensure thorough and consistent communication with workers and to roll-out training on new site procedures.	Ensure new measures are communicated to workers through sub-contracting chains, meetings or other communication methods. Work with sub-contractor management teams to achieve alignment on COVID-19 transmission avoidance measures. Work with sub-contractors to obtain PPE for tasks whereby social distancing is not feasible.
Many construction workers, especially on remote sites, are migrant workers (internal or cross-border).	Where sites have been closed, it may be difficult or impossible to recall workers, especially where the workforce comprises a large proportion of internal or cross-border migrants who have returned to their homes or country of origin. It may be difficult to communicate health and safety policies to migrant workers engaged through third parties, where there are multiple language groups on site, and where workers have low literacy levels.	Ensure health and safety communication – and training about changes to working arrangements – are provided in a language that workers understand. Make use of different kinds of media to address potential literacy issues and gaps in communication (e.g. posters and illustrative diagrams posted in prominent positions on site). Ensure migrants have access to adequate medical facilities on site, supplemented with isolation protocols and refer them to external providers if COVID-19 is suspected. Develop a stand-alone symptom testing regime. Where available obtain COVID-19 testing kits.
Workers may rely on employer-provided accommodation, canteens and transport, particularly where worksites are remote or there is a significant proportion of migrant workers on site.	Accommodation checks and assessments will need to be completed to ensure COVID-19 controls are in place. Workers may still be in worker accommodation, but not yet able to return to work. This may lead to additional pressures on living facilities (e.g. leisure, dining and health services), and limit social distancing prospects.	Ensure ongoing health and safety monitoring of on-site or near-site worker accommodation. Employers should produce COVID-19-compliant accommodation checklists and communicate the findings to management and all workers. Review waste management facilities and ensure that it is possible to securely bag and isolate waste emanating from anyone living in on-site accommodation whilst suffering from COVID-19 Ensure on-site health clinics are adequately equipped, and there are designated transportation services to take workers to other facilities if needed. Plan for how to access emergency services in the event that any workers start to experience severe respiratory problems.
On site project requirements or social distancing measures may require rotating cohorts of workers.	Social distancing requirements may mean that it is necessary to create smaller teams or restrict the amount of work and social contact between sub-contractor teams. Teams may have staggered shifts and break times. This may restrict the flow of information around the site.	Procedures should ensure all team supervisors are adequately informed about return to work plans and how to communicate with teams on any new health and safety policies or procedures.

5.2 Construction

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
Construction industry characteristics can be considered in terms of its features of output; size; government as a main client; nature of demand for construction output; nature of construction work; variety of construction technology; and structure of the industry. The main client of the construction industry is government through policy, infrastructure and development. Demand of construction is in various types and sizes, from major projects to SMEs working on smaller types of construction work (i.e. small building sites, drainage work, roofing, plumbing, etc.).	Keeping up with changing regulation in the workplace is a major challenge, especially with a large percentage of SME owners viewing health and safety as a priority. As the construction industry is particularly vulnerable to certain health and safety risks, it is even more crucial to keep up to date with all guidance on the pandemic and the work restrictions it may impose. Construction projects involving large numbers of workers and labour accommodation will need to be strictly monitored for COVID-19 hazards (i.e. close attention to housekeeping standards; daily or continued sterilisation of work surfaces; washroom cleanliness; and social distancing throughout accommodation buildings).	*Many of measures highlighted in Section 5.1 will be applicable to the construction industry and associated projects.* The construction industry involves hazardous types of work, including electrical, mechanical, and physical tasks. Risk assessment plays a major part of identifying hazards and implementing controls. Employers must assess risk across several types of activities and ensure they have done all that is reasonably practicable to reduce risk to an acceptable level. Risk assessment does not need to be complicated, simple steps can be taken to identify the hazard, look who may be harmed, evaluate the risk, record the findings, and review when necessary. In labour accommodation buildings, simple daily checklists should be adapted to take COVID-19 into account and used to ensure all housekeeping, cleaning, and sterilisation of surfaces has been completed. This may also include undertaking body temperature checks and recording the results. Create clearly demarcated safe and comfortable areas within accommodation facilities where workers can self-isolate for long (c. 14 day) periods should they become infected (or have a suspected COVID-19 infection).

5.3 Agribusiness

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
The agribusiness industry produces goods that are quickly perishable and bulky in nature. Agricultural goods are difficult to control in terms of safety, quality and quantity of output. Product differentiation is not possible, and nature plays a crucial role in production. Agricultural goods have inelastic demand. Due to COVID-19 health and safety, the hygiene, production, handling and movement of goods has become more difficult, affecting output.	Movement of food and feed, and the handling and control of heavy equipment. Due to the nature of agricultural work, protection against infection will depend on strict adherence to health and safety controls, personal hygiene, PPE and implementation of procedural controls. Abbatoirs pose a particular health risk as the virus lives longer in cold locations and employees work in close proximity. Crops need to be protected from pests and animals. Every year, farmers suffer heavy loss of revenue due to crop loss caused by the activities of pests, insects and animals. To protect their crops, farmers use pesticides and insecticides. They also use electrical fences to safeguard crops from other animals.	Review routine tasks and conduct a risk assessment, including food and feed safety management for the protection, health and safety and hygiene of products. This will identify general and specific hazards and controls to protect from potential contamination. Prioritise biosecurity security measures – in the form of sterilisation booths, cleaning and disinfecting protective clothing and vehicles – before and after contact with animals and promote the use of disposable protective clothing. Other controls may include body temperature monitoring, and banning vehicles, equipment and clothing contaminated with animal excreta (during farm work). Minimise the number of people in vehicles and avoid multi-occupancy in buildings, storage areas and car parks. Check and monitor clothing taken off-site for laundering. Clean contaminated clothing before leaving animal areas. Clean and disinfect boots before leaving animal areas. Consider adapting working practices and making changes to workforce procedures. Clear biosecurity signs should be installed and implemented at work area entry and exit points that notify the public of potential biohazards in the area.
COVID-19 is raising questions throughout the agricultural industry, leading to widespread unemployment and causing a significant downturn in the general economy.	As we see growing levels of concern, and protective practices to slow the spread of COVID-19, consumers will be making hard choices about personal health and safety, food, eating away from home, and overall spending. Dairy is prominently featured in out-of-home eating, and there may be some disruptions in food service sales.	Contingency planning is crucial. Employers must maintain a high awareness of workplace hygiene, including the sterilisation of farming plant, equipment and vehicles. Workers should also be made aware of plans to cope with possible future spikes in infection rates, including prospects for quarantine periods and rapidly transitioning workers to different roles or no work activity.
The supply chain in the agricultural industry is driven heavily by food consumption and the movement of goods.	As logistics are disrupted and efforts proceed to slow the spread of the virus, multiple connected industry sectors are already being impacted. With some products, "panic buying" is creating additional concern. As an example of supply chain interruptions on farms short supply for at least some of the larger manufacturers.	Communicate with staff and assess workers' needs, including obstacles to continuing work, prior to work recommencement or return to previous roles. Continue to allow for flexible and remote working options where possible.
Parts of the workforce will be classed as lone workers due to the nature of tasks and activities in the agricultural industry (i.e. driving farm tractors, monitoring silo feeds, bulk handling and moving product) and other food production requirements.	Should the virus spread more broadly in an agricultural country, we could see issues with farm product delivery and pickup as workers (e.g. milk truck drivers) stay home due to illness or because they are caring for family members or school-age children.	Remote working may continue to be the norm for some roles. Ensure remote workers continue to be adequately supervised and given the health and safety support needed to carry out their work. Controls highlighted in the risk assessment should be implemented, tested and modified if necessary. Communicate clearly with any workers returning to pre-COVID farming locations. Ensure all staff understand the hazards and importance of health and safety control measures. Ensure there are clear channels in place for ongoing communication and workforce consultation.

5.4 Financial services

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
Many roles are desk-based, and do not involve face-to-face contact with clients.	Where workers can continue to perform their roles remotely, their return to pre-COVID work locations may be postponed. This involves a range of ongoing people management challenges, including ensuring a dispersed workforce remains engaged, informed, and productive.	Remote working can be a physical workplace risk in operational health and safety and needs to be managed. Ensure remote workers are adequately supervised. The employer may need to consider lone working arrangements and buddy systems to minimise workers becoming detached from co-workers in the event of an accident or incident.
Some financial institutions have a decentralised structure, with a network of branches or offices where staff have limited direct contact with head office.	Branch managers will be increasingly relied on to ensure branch staff are kept informed and updated about changes to working arrangements and company policies and procedures.	Ensure local managers receive the training they need to inform and communicate with their staff, ensure a smooth return to work and to consistently roll-out any new health and safety policies, specifically those relating to return to work arrangements.
Some roles may be predominantly occupied by women (e.g. administrative staff).	Women workers may be unable to return to work or may require greater flexibility in working times due to caregiving roles and responsibilities.	Communicate with staff before work resumes. Assess workers' needs, including obstacles to returning to work. Allow for flexible and remote working options where possible ensuring health and safety is maintained by carrying out a risk assessment.

5.5 Manufacturing

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
COVID-19 could have a range of effects on the manufacturing industry, which continues to face 'survival of the fittest' challenges. In some instances, demand for output may be higher due to order backlog or production of essential items (e.g. PPE).	Over the past 15 years, manufacturers have fought through tough economics and endured increased complexity in the industry. The future of manufacturing, like its past, will require transformation. Manufacturers will need to embrace new processes and ways of working. Manufacturing facilities will have additional health and safety risks to evaluate including, cross-contamination of infectious diseases, pressures on working hours, changes in shift patterns (which may lead to fatigue), overtime, either as a result of a sudden increase in orders or where the full return of the workforce is not feasible. Increased economic uncertainty could mean workers are willing to work extra hours due to concerns about job security or to make up for lost or diminished wages during lockdown. Employers may look to reduce their workforce and overload their existing workforce to compensate. This will lead to deficiencies in competency and greater risk of accidents.	Carefully monitor working hours and overtime to ensure ongoing compliance with OHS legislation. Where national laws on working hours have been relaxed, safety principles should still be paramount. Additional skills training should be considered if the workforce has been depleted. Where recruitment is required, ensure health and safety training forms part of the workplace induction process. Ensure all new staff receive training on company policies and procedures. Risk assessments may need to be reviewed and updated to take into account new potential hazards and new ways of working. Where workers are unable to return to work for a long period, consider ongoing health and safety support. This may include risk assessments for home working and assistance with the workplace set-up at home, such as display screen equipment.
Work typically takes place at fixed locations, in teams, and is dependent on access to physical materials and machines.	Remote working is typically not possible for non-administrative staff, but physical distancing may be difficult in production facilities. For instance, production lines may bring workers into close proximity with one another, and machinery or workstations may be difficult or impossible to shift. Maintenance work is a critical part of the production process, ensuring machinery continues to function as it was designed. To ensure worker safety, employers may need to maintain a limited number of key engineering staff for maintenance or breakdown work and work permits for high hazard activities during shutdown periods. Employers may also need to carry out a phased return to work (i.e. gradual return of workforce) or alter the organisation of shifts (e.g. staggered start and finish times to reduce crowding at entry and exit points).	Where possible, workers and their representatives should be consulted to assess health and safety needs and concerns. Consult with union or workplace safety representatives about the return to work and maintain regular dialogue once workers have returned to production facilities. Social distancing measures at fixed work locations can be implemented by carefully positioning work equipment or re-designing the workspace. Staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics. Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty. Maintaining use of security access devices, such as keypads or passes, and adjusting processes at entry/exit points to reduce risk of transmission. For example, cleaning pass readers regularly and asking staff to hold their passes above pass readers rather than touching them. Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios, telephones or other electronic devices, where permitted, and cleaning them between use. Reducing job and equipment rotation

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
		Ensure maintenance workers can access equipment safely while keeping a two-metre safe distance. First aid cover in the event of an accident or incident should also be assessed to ensure compliance with current legislative requirements. New maintenance procedures that include COVID-19 information should be communicated and implemented. Employers should ensure good communications on health and safety, particularly around how the return to work is being managed and any changes to working practices. Return to work communication should be treated as an ongoing process, not a one-off event. This may include health and safety updates, briefings, training, written information to improve understanding of COVID-19 risks, risk assessment, government and company policies, and procedures and actions. Make sure policies are updated to reflect any COVID-19-related changes and consequences for breaches, and ensure these changes are communicated to all staff.
Work typically carried out on production lines in small team units, closely managed by supervisors.	Social distancing requirements may bring new responsibilities and management challenges for supervisors. For instance, it may be necessary to update work procedures. Where physical distancing has led to more dispersed work positions, and there is less communal or peer oversight, employers may consider creating small fixed teams and restrict the amount of work and social contact between teams. Small teams could arrive, take breaks, have lunch and leave at the same time.	Make sure all supervisors are adequately informed about return to work plans and can communicate with workers on any new policies or procedures, including updated risk assessments. Reinforce knowledge of company policies and procedures, particularly those relating to OHS.
Workers may rely on public transport or employer-provided transport to arrive at work.	Social distancing rules mean that transportation vehicles will not be operating at full capacity. This means workers will not all be able to arrive at the same time and – in the case of public transport – may arrive late if they cannot board vehicles. Local authorities may request employers to stagger start and finish times to avoid crowding at peak times.	Contact municipal authorities to discuss how to manage worker movements in the interests of maximising worker and community safety. Recognise the COVID-19 transmission prevention measures that transport operators are putting in place (such as use of facemasks) and reinforce these in communications with workers
The workforce may include a significant proportion of migrant workers or other vulnerable groups.	Migrant workers may be at greater risk to exposure at work or in accommodation (e.g. inadequate space requirements in the workplace, cramped transport and accommodation, limited access to medical support, testing or PPE).	Undertake a risk assessment to identify 'at risk' worker populations, high risk activities and potential transmission points. Adapt accommodation facilities and transport services to promote social distancing requirements and ensure ongoing monitoring of hygiene standards in accommodation units. Evaluate cleaning regimes and the regularity of cleaning cycles. Make simple provisions which allow accommodation users to wash hands and clean clothing frequently. Make sure information is provided to workers in languages they understand.

5.6 Retail/business to consumer

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
As government directives are relaxed, essential and non-essential retailers require flexibility to quickly adapt, implement and communicate ongoing safety measures. The COVID-19 outbreak may have led to significant changes in demand, and uncertainty about future demand. In some cases, there may have been a significant slump in demand (e.g. where shops have closed due to lockdown), while demand for goods and services may be higher for certain companies (e.g. retail in essential goods and services).	Retailers face considerable challenges, with the majority forced to either close or completely rethink their operations. As the rate of infection begins to flatten out, governments are starting to incrementally lift lockdown measures. However, it is highly unlikely life will return to the normality we knew before the restrictions came into effect. Where there is decreased demand, workers may continue to be furloughed for long periods of time. This may influence their ability to function competently when they return to work, and the unfamiliarity of work tasks could create health and safety issues and concerns. Behaviour may turn negative if workers are not suited to new working patterns or revised start and finish times.	Where workers are unable to return to work for a long period, consider what kind of ongoing health and safety support is possible. Carry out, review or consult your risk assessment Assess competency levels to ensure workers can safely carry out their duties and have not lost familiarity with work tasks and the work environment. Where any social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to 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 their staff. Including: Further increasing the frequency of sanitizing areas and equipment, hand washing and surface cleaning. Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible. Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other (especially till operating staff from customers). Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible. Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’ (so each person works with only a few others). If people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment. In your risk assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Where there is increased demand for goods and services, ensure working hours, shift patterns, overtime and break times are closely monitored and that health and safety risks (i.e. earlier start times, late finishing times (fatigue) and disrupted home and work life balance) are controlled. Employers may need to assess its workforce and implement selection criteria for types of work or jobs to ensure the right fit.

Sector characteristics	Potential challenges	Potential responses
A considerable number of roles require contact with the public (e.g. delivery drivers and retail staff).	Workers in public-facing roles may experiences delays in returning to work, depending on how lockdown measures are eased. Transmission risks may arise from public contact. Workers may not adhere to health and safety advice and controls implemented via risk assessment.	Remote working may continue as the new norm for some roles. Ensure these workers continue to be adequately supervised and given the support that they need to carry out their work. Communicate clearly with any workers returning to pre-COVID work locations and ensure all staff understand the reasoning. Ensure there are clear channels in place for ongoing workforce communication and consultation.
Some healthcare workers (e.g. nurses) may rely on shared worker accommodation.	Accommodation use may create pressures on living facilities and limit prospects for social distancing (e.g. significantly more use of leisure, dining and health services than they were designed for). In some cases, public health requirements may limit the ability of workers to leave worker accommodation.	Ensure there is clear health and safety communication with all workers in public-facing roles. Employees should understand the plan for return to work, the health and safety systems and risk assessments that are being put in place and how to identify hazards and reduce risk. Ensure information is provided on reporting incidents, accidents, first aid arrangements and record any concerns or suggestions on additional health and safety measures. Where workers are unable to return to public-facing roles (e.g. because of personal or family member health conditions), explore options for transfers to other roles.
Some workers may be engaged through on-demand arrangements (e.g. drivers in the gig economy) or commission-based arrangements.	It can be difficult to communicate health and safety precautions, and any changes in working arrangements, with workers who may have multiple clients and who log in through digital platforms.	Ensure workers receive clear information about health and safety precautions (i.e. carrying out a display screen equipment risk assessment if working from home) including any changes in how work is distributed and carried out.
Workers may rely on public transport to get to work.	Social distancing rules mean that transportation vehicles will not be operating at full capacity. This means workers will not all be able to arrive at the same time and – in the case of public transport – may arrive late if they cannot board vehicles.	Consider adjusting retail site opening hours to accommodate new starting times. Risk assessments will need to incorporate this to ensure all health and safety hazards and COVID-19 risks have been assessed, evaluated and controlled to an acceptable level.

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Assessment n.			**Assessed by**		
Rev n.	1	**Date of assessment**		**Date of issue**	
Location / activity	COVID-19 Risk Assessment				
Description	General COVID-19 risk assessment example (to be made specific to your organisation's activities, premises and industry, using the industry-specific guidance in this document).				

Likelihood		**Severity** 1 Low	2 Slight	3 Moderate	4 Major	5 Fatality
1	Remote	1	2	3	4	5
2	Unlikely	2	4	6	8	10
3	Possible	3	6	9	12	15
4	Likely	4	8	12	16	20
5	Certain	5	10	15	20	25

Likelihood

Remote: may occur in exceptional circumstances.
Unlikely: could occur at some time.
Possible: might occur at some time.
Likely: will probably occur in most circumstances.
Certain: is expected to occur.

Severity

Low: minor harm.
Slight: first aid.
Moderate: medical treatment required.
Major: extensive injuries.
Fatal: fatalities.

	Acceptable risk. No further action or additional controls are required. Existing controls should be monitored.
	Risks need review and efforts made to reduce them to as low as reasonably practicable.
	Risks not adequately controlled and urgent action needed. Suspend activity immediately if work in progress.

Task	**Hazard**	**Risks**	**People at risk**	**Risk** S	L	**R**	**Additional control measures required**	**Residual risk** S	L	**R**
Someone enters the site/workplace with COVID-19	COVID-19 transmission	A visitor infected with COVID-19 enters the workplace and passes the virus to employees.	Employees Visitors Site team Public	5	2	10	1: A request has been sent to companies that regularly attend our premises or those we work alongside to provide their health and safety policy/arrangements or RAMS (risk assessment and method statement) regarding COVID-19. We will not work alongside companies that do not provide us with this information. 2: As a company we have spoken to the parts of our supply chain that could influence the spread of COVID-19 to discuss arrangements and infection transmission control measures. 3: An information poster/email is sent to regular visitors which highlights the risks of COVID-19 and states that symptomatic individuals will not be allowed entry or will be requested to leave. 4: An information poster highlighting the symptoms of COVID-19 is placed on the entry/sign in point. The poster will state that symptomatic individuals will not be allowed entry. 5: Hygiene requirements (handwashing etc.) and symptoms of COVID-19 will be included within the Induction. 6: COVID-19 information posters placed in designated locations within the workplace (toilets, notice boards, etc.). 7: This information has been passed onto employees. Employees will only be allowed to work if they are well and neither they nor any members of their household are self-isolating.	5	1	5

Task	Hazard	Risks	People at risk	Risk			Additional control measures required	Residual risk		
				S	L	R		S	L	R
Someone becomes ill within the workplace or site	COVID-19 transmission	Contracted COVID-19 by any means.	Employees Visitors Site team Public	5	2	10	1: Person will be removed to a designated area which is at least two metres away from other people. 2: We have identified a designated room or area (such as a staff office) where they can be isolated behind a closed door. If it is possible to open a window, we will do so for ventilation. 3: The individual will be sent home and advised to follow local self-isolation guidance online. If the person is a visitor, their organisation will also be contacted. 4: The workplace will be decontaminated and deep cleaned. 5: This information has been passed on to employees.	5	1	5
Contaminated workplace	COVID-19 transmission	A person catches COVID-19 due to contaminated surfaces.	Employees Visitors Site team Public	5	2	10	1: An increased formal cleaning regime is underway. Employees are cleaning equipment more often (keyboards, work surfaces, door handles etc.). 2: Hand sanitisers have been placed in the workplace and information about their use has been circulated. 3: Extra hygiene requirements (handwashing etc.) are enforced. 4: Multi-use handtowels are not used to dry hands. 5: This information has been passed on to employees.	5	1	5
Proximity, workplace gatherings	COVID-19 transmission	A person catches COVID-19 due to working closely with an infected person.	Employees Visitors Site team Public	5	2	10	1: A *Social Distancing* policy has been implemented. All work areas and activities have been evaluated against the possibility to implement social distancing (no handshaking, 2m rule, deferring large meetings etc.). 2: This information has been passed on to employees.	5	1	5

Appendix 2: Checklist

Company name:	**Project title:**
Location:	**Inspection no:**
Overview: During the COVID-19 pandemic it is essential to minimise the risk of infection and protect the workforce. This checklist identifies the key areas that should be regularly monitored.	
What you need to do: Work through the checklist, ensuring each point is actioned, where appropriate, to ensure ongoing compliance with both established and additional procedures.	

When to travel to work	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
Are all workers being regularly briefed on whether to travel to work or not (e.g. if someone falls ill, is social distancing or in self-isolation)?	◯	◯	◯
Are up-to-date records being kept for workers who have fallen ill or are self-isolating?	◯	◯	◯
Travel to work			
Are workers being informed of recommended ways of travelling to and from site on an on-going basis?	◯	◯	◯
Are additional arrangements for vehicle and bicycle parking still adequate?	◯	◯	◯
Site access and exit			
Are all non-essential visitors being stopped and their details recorded?	◯	◯	◯
Are staggered start and finish times reducing congestion at access and exit points to acceptable levels?	◯	◯	◯
Are additional site access and exit points reducing congestion to acceptable levels?	◯	◯	◯
Is the one-way system reducing congestion to acceptable levels?	◯	◯	◯
Are workers being briefed regularly on the importance of social distancing when entering and leaving the site?	◯	◯	◯
Are the facilities for hand washing when entering and leaving the site being used?	◯	◯	◯
Is enhanced cleaning at touchpoints in access and exit areas being completed?	◯	◯	◯
Are site deliveries being managed properly to ensure social distancing measures are complied with?	◯	◯	◯
General site measures			
Are there now restricted numbers of workers attending site inductions, and do site induction areas comply with social distancing measures?	◯	◯	◯
Is the site induction being regularly updated to ensure it meets current site operating procedures?	◯	◯	◯
Are the enhanced, site-wide cleaning procedures being completed as planned?	◯	◯	◯
In order to comply with social distancing measures, are areas with marked flooring still in place and legible?	◯	◯	◯
Are all workers being regularly briefed on site-specific social distancing measures?	◯	◯	◯
Have all applicable tasks been rearranged to enable them to be completed by one person, or by maintaining social distancing measures of two metres?	◯	◯	◯
Are tasks where work within two metres cannot be avoided being risk assessed?	◯	◯	◯
Hand washing			
Are workers taking additional breaks to facilitate hand washing?	◯	◯	◯
Are additional hand washing facilities (for example, pop-ups) being used?	◯	◯	◯
Are hand washing facilities being checked, cleaned and topped up on a regular basis?	◯	◯	◯
Are all workers following hand washing procedures (for example, a minimum 20 second duration)?	◯	◯	◯
Toilet facilities			
Are the restrictions on the number of people using the toilet facilities at any one time working?	◯	◯	◯
In order to comply with social distancing measures, are areas with marked flooring still in place and legible?	◯	◯	◯
Are the enhanced toilet cleaning measures being completed as planned?	◯	◯	◯
Are personnel washing or sanitising their hands both before and after using the facilities?	◯	◯	◯

Canteens and rest areas			
Are the restrictions on the number of people using the canteen and rest areas at any one time working?	◯	◯	◯
Is capacity of all canteen and rest area facilities being displayed?	◯	◯	◯
Are staggered break times reducing congestion in the canteen and rest areas to acceptable levels?	◯	◯	◯
Are workers bringing in their own food to reduce canteen staffing levels?	◯	◯	◯
Is the canteen providing pre-prepared or wrapped food to encourage social distancing?	◯	◯	◯
Are the enhanced toilet cleaning measures being completed as planned (with particular focus on touchpoints, tables, kettles, refrigerators and microwave ovens)?	◯	◯	◯
Are the facilities for the disposal of rubbish being emptied on a regular basis?	◯	◯	◯
Are workers washing or sanitising their hands when entering and leaving these areas?	◯	◯	◯
Changing facilities, showers and drying rooms			
Are the restrictions on numbers of personnel using the facilities at any one time working?	◯	◯	◯
Is the capacity of the facilities being displayed?	◯	◯	◯
Are the staggered start and finish times reducing congestion at access and exit points to acceptable levels?	◯	◯	◯
Are the enhanced cleaning measures being completed as planned?	◯	◯	◯
First aid and emergency response			
Are there additional resources in place (for example, first aiders and trauma equipment)?	◯	◯	◯
Are there suitable first-aid risk assessments in place that cover the potential breach of social distancing guidelines?	◯	◯	◯
Do the muster (assembly) areas comply with social distancing guidelines?	◯	◯	◯
Communication, documentation and monitoring			
Are all relevant systems and procedures, such as risk assessments and method statements, being reviewed and updated on a regular basis?	◯	◯	◯
Are all relevant contractor systems and procedures, such as risk assessments and method statements, being reviewed and updated on a regular basis?	◯	◯	◯
Are all personnel being briefed on site-wide areas of change?	◯	◯	◯
Are those personnel affected by changes to specific activity risk assessments and method statements being briefed?	◯	◯	◯
Are all site briefing records up-to-date and correct?	◯	◯	◯
Are all new workplace procedures being followed?	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

Name:	**Position:**
Signature:	**Date:**

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