

SOCIAL DISTANCING IN THE WORKPLACE- BEST PRACTISE PRINCIPLES

Risk Management Guide

Introduction

During this time of unprecedented disruption, the UK Government is not asking all business to shut- indeed it is important for business to carry on. Only some non- essential shops and public venues have been instructed to close.

The UK Government understands that employers and business may have concerns how they can remain open for business safety, and so play their part in preventing the spread of the virus. All employees should be encouraged to work from home unless it is impossible for them to do so. If you cannot work from home, then you can still travel to work.

Social distances general principles

Social distancing involves reducing day-to-day contact with other people as much as possible, in order to reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone and should be followed wherever possible.



Workplaces need to avoid crowding and minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (3 steps) between individuals wherever possible. This advice applies both to inside the workplace, and to where staff may need to interact with customers.

Staff should be reminded to wash their hands regularly using soap and water for 20 seconds and particularly after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing. Where facilities to wash hands are not available, hand sanitiser should be used. Workers should cover any coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then dispose of the tissue in a bin and immediately wash their hands.

The practical implementations of this advice will depend on your specific trade and local circumstances, but a few general indicators will be relevant to the majority of business settings, as follows:

- make regular announcements to remind staff and/or customers to follow social distancing advice and wash their hands regularly
- encourage the use of digital and remote transfers of material where possible rather than paper format, such as using e-forms, emails and e-banking
- provide additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities if possible, providing soap, water, hand sanitiser and tissues and encourage staff to use them

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- where it is possible to remain 2 metres apart, use floor markings to mark the distance, particularly in the most crowded areas (for example, where queues form)
- where it is not possible to remain 2 metres apart, staff should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face if possible
- where face-to-face contact is essential, this should be kept to 15 minutes or less wherever possible
- as much as possible, keep teams of workers together (cohorting).
- keep teams as small as possible

Additionally, for customer- facing business we would recommend the following:

- use signage to direct movement into lanes, if feasible, while maintaining a 2 metre distance
- regulate entry so that the premises do not become overcrowded
- use additional signage to ask customers not to enter the premises if they have symptoms
- if feasible, place plexiglass barriers at points of regular interaction as an additional element of protection for workers and customers (where customers might touch or lean against these, ensure they are cleaned and disinfected as often as is feasible in line with standard cleaning procedures)

Shift working and staggering processes.

Where it is not possible for work to be completed at home, businesses should consider shift working or the staggering of processes which would enable staff to continue to operate both effectively and where possible at a safe distance (more than 2 metres) from one another. Staggering on-premises hours to reduce public transport use during peak periods will provide benefit to employees, businesses and the wider public effort.

Practically, a business could consider:

- splitting staff into teams with alternate days working from home, or splitting across a day and night shift
- as far as possible, where staff are split into teams, fixing these splits (cohorting), so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same individuals
- spreading out standard processes, so that only one team needs to be on the premises to complete a task at a given time
- where it is possible to remain 2 metres apart, using signage such as floor markings to facilitate compliance, particularly in the most crowded areas. This includes entry points to buildings, toilets and communal break areas where queues may form

Businesses working on shift patterns should:

- ensure that the business's social distancing measures are effectively communicated to all staff
- ensure frequent cleaning and disinfecting of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products and particularly at the end and beginning of shifts

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Staff canteens and rest areas

Where possible, staff should be encouraged to bring their own food, and staff canteens and distributors should move to takeaway. Where there are no practical alternatives, workplace canteens may remain open to provide food to staff with appropriate adjustments for social distancing. The following principles should be applied:

- canteen staff who are unwell should not be at work
- canteen staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food
- staff should be reminded to wash their hands regularly using soap and water for 20 seconds, before, and after eating. If possible, increase the number of hand washing stations available
- a distance of 2 metres should be maintained between users, wherever possible
- staff can continue to use rest areas if they apply the same social distancing measures
- notices promoting hand hygiene and social distancing should be placed visibly in these areas
- frequently clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products
- consider extending and staggering meal times to avoid crowding

Staying at home if you, or someone in your household, has symptoms of COVID-19 on site.

If anyone becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature in the business or workplace, they should be advised to follow the UK Government stay at home advice for households with possible COVID-19 infection. If these symptoms develop whilst at work, they should be sent home, they should return home quickly and directly. If they have to use public transport, they should try to keep away from other people and catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue.

If you, or an employee, need clinical advice, they should go to [NHS 111 online](#), or call 111 if they don't have internet access. In an emergency, call 999 if they are seriously ill or injured or their life is at risk. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital. If the member of staff lives in a household where someone else is unwell with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) then they must stay at home in line with the stay at home advice.

UK Government Stay At Home Advice- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

Limiting spread of COVID-19 in business and workplace.

Businesses and employers can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by reminding everyone of the public health advice. The UK government has various guidance posters and leaflets that can be used.

UK Government Posters, Leaflets and Other Material - <https://coronavirusresources.phe.gov.uk>

Employees and customers should be reminded to wash their hands for 20 seconds more frequently than normal. Employers should frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning product

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Industry specific

Shops- running a pick up or delivery service

You should ensure that no orders are taken in person on the premises. You should only take orders online or by telephone and communicate this to customers by clear signage in store and online.

The advice on social distancing measures applies to everyone and you should take steps to avoid crowding and minimise opportunities for the virus to spread by maintaining a distance of 2 metres between individuals, wherever possible.

Collections

Where customers are collecting items, they should have staggered collection times. When customers whose orders are ready enter, they should enter one at a time to collect orders and make payments, maintaining a safe distance.

Where queuing is taking place, you should use queue management systems to maintain a safe distance.

Deliveries

For retailers or restaurants running a delivery service, you should advise all delivery drivers that no goods or food should be physically handed over to the customer. There should instead be a set drop-off point agreed in advance. After ringing the doorbell, the driver should maintain a safe distance from the door and oversee the delivery of the goods. The goods should not be left unattended.

You should introduce a way for customers to be able to notify your business that they are in self-isolation or are unwell in advance of the delivery, in which case these guidelines should be very strictly followed. The driver should not enter the customer's property.

To minimise the risk that a customer does not answer the door, sensible steps such as setting an approximate delivery time and gaining a contact number should be taken.

You should advise drivers to wash their hands using soap and water for 20 seconds as regularly as possible, and drivers should be given hand-sanitiser to be carried at all times and used after each delivery.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues and drivers daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

Tradespeople and working in people's homes.

You are a tradesperson carrying out essential repairs and maintenance in people's homes. You can continue work, providing that you are well and have no symptoms. You should notify all clients in advance of your arrival.

On entry to the home you should wash your hands using soap and water for 20 seconds. You should wash your hands regularly, particularly after blowing your nose, sneezing or coughing, and when leaving the property. Where facilities to wash hands are not available, hand sanitiser should be used, and you should carry this with you at all times.



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You should maintain a safe distance (at least 2 metres) from any household occupants at all times and ensure good ventilation in the area where you are working, including opening the window.

No work should be carried out in any household which is isolating or where an individual is being shielded, unless your work is to remedy a direct risk to the safety of the household, such as emergency plumbing or repair.

No work should be carried out by a tradesperson who has coronavirus symptoms, however mild.

Construction

Construction work plays an important role in ensuring public safety and the provision of public services. It can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible.

Where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full in relation to a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the site to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission.

If you decide the work should go ahead, you should advise staff to wash their hands frequently using soap and water for 20 seconds, and especially after blowing their nose, sneezing or coughing, on arrival at work, before and after eating, after using public transport, and when they arrive home. Where facilities to wash hands are not available, hand sanitiser should be used.

You should still advise staff to keep 2 metres apart as much as possible. You should plan work to minimise contact between workers and avoid skin-to-skin and face-to-face contact. Where face-to-face contact is essential, this should be kept to 15 minutes or less wherever possible.

As much as possible, keep groups of workers working together in teams that are as small as possible (cohorting). For example, you keep vehicle crews working together, rather than mixing crew members on different shifts.

Staff should also wash their hands each time before getting into enclosed machinery (such as diggers) with others and wash their hands every time they get out. To help with this, you should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and/or hand sanitiser.

Employees should keep the windows of enclosed machinery or enclosed spaces open for ventilation and be careful to avoid touching their face at all times. The inside of cabs should be regularly cleaned, particularly between use by different operators.

You should try to use stairs in preference to lifts or hoists. Where lifts or hoists must be used, you should lower their capacity to reduce congestion and contact at all times, and regularly clean touchpoints, such as doors and buttons.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.



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For additional industry specific advice please refer to the following:

UK Government advice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-COVID-19-letter-to-the-construction-sector>

<https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/>

The Construction Leadership Council <https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/>

Build UK <https://builduk.org/coronavirus/>

Manufacturing and processing businesses

Manufacturing plays an important role in the economy. It can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible. Where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full in relation to a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

If you decide the work should continue, staff should work side by side or facing away from each other rather than face-to-face if possible.

You should increase the frequency of cleaning procedures, pausing production in the day if necessary, for cleaning staff to wipe down workstations with disinfectant.

You should assign staff to the same shift teams to limit social interaction.

You should not allow staff to congregate in break times; you should consider arrangements such as staggered break times so that staff can continue to practice social distancing when taking breaks.

You should communicate to all staff that they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or more at the beginning and end of every break, when they arrive at work and before they leave. To help with this, you should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and/or hand sanitiser.



When entering and leaving, you should ensure your workforce stays 2 metres apart as much as possible. To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

UK Government Food processing advice-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-COVID-19#maintaining-social-distancing-in-specific-food-business-settings>

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Retail

You run a retail outlet which, in line with the government advice on retail, remains open. To protect staff and customers, you should manage entry into the store, only allowing a limited number of people into your store at any given time.

You should put up signage to ask customers with symptoms not to enter the store, and to remind both staff and customers to always keep 2 metres from other people, wherever possible.

You should regularly encourage staff to wash their hands with soap and water as often as possible and for 20 seconds every time.

If feasible, you should also put up plexiglass barriers at all points of regular interaction to further reduce the risk of infection for all parties involved, cleaning the barriers regularly. You should still advise staff to keep 2 metres apart as much as possible.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

UK Government advice for supermarkets <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-COVID-19>

Logistics businesses

Logistics businesses play an important role in ensuring goods can get to where they are needed, and they can continue to operate if they do so in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible. Where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full in relation to a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

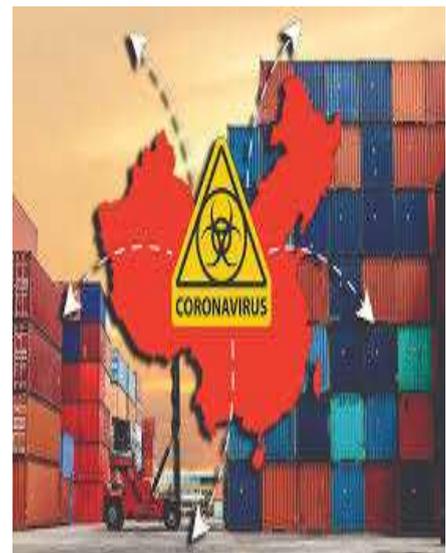
If a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained, staff should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face if possible.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

You should also put up signage and floor markings in the warehouse, encouraging a 2 metre distance from colleagues where it is at all feasible.

In addition, you should regularly encourage staff to wash their hands with soap and water as often as possible and for a minimum of 20 seconds every time.

To help with this, you should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser. To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.



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Outdoor businesses

This applies to businesses situated outdoors – market stalls, farms, quarries, commercial forests or other outdoor businesses - where it is not possible for workers to observe social distancing guidelines at all times.

Where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full in relation to a particular activity, you should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

If a 2-metre distance cannot be maintained, staff should work side-by-side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face if possible. You should communicate to all staff that they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or more and more frequently than normal.

If workers have to share enclosed spaces such as the cabs of vehicles, they should keep the window open for ventilation and they should be careful to avoid touching their face at all times. On leaving the enclosed space, they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or more or use hand sanitiser when they cannot wash their hands.

If customer facing, you should consider how you can safely sell your products or services without encouraging crowds and ensure hygiene measures are in place. This could be done by taking orders online or by telephone in advance and pre-packing orders to limit face-to-face time, or considering delivery services if possible. When interacting with customers, you should maintain a 2-metre distance as much as possible.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

Farming: visiting farms for animal health welfare

Farming and maintaining animal welfare are important and can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible.

If you provide services such as sheep shearing, sheep dipping and foot trimming to different farms it is not possible for workers to stay 2 metres apart at all times.

You should communicate to all staff that they should wash their hands for 20 seconds or more and more frequently than normal, and always when arriving at or leaving a farm or premises or use hand sanitiser when they cannot wash their hands. They should be careful to avoid touching their face at all times.

You should arrange work so that you and colleagues can frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products. This should be done both during the working day and when moving between premises.

Fishing

You operate one or more fishing or other vessels which are offshore for short periods. When at sea those working on board the vessel or platform are not always able to be 2 metres apart. Where this is the case, staff should work side-by-side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face if possible.

You should communicate to all those working on board that they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or more and more frequently than normal.

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You should increase the frequency of cleaning procedures on the vessel and ensure it is disinfected as often as is feasible.

You should still advise staff to keep 2 metres apart as much as possible.

To protect your staff, you should remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

Transport businesses

Transport is vital to support our economy and public services. Social distancing should be maintained where possible, but we recognise that on many forms of transport, staff will not always be able to stay 2 metres away from each other or passengers at all times. In these circumstances, staff should minimise how long such periods are and avoid face-to-face contact with other staff or passengers.



You should remind all customers that they should only travel when essential, such as travelling to work when they cannot work from home and that when they do so they should also remain 2 metres apart where possible.

You may consider the use of signage, e.g. floor markings, to signal 2-metre intervals to facilitate social distancing between passengers whilst transiting through transport hubs and on public transport. You should communicate that staff should wash their hands for 20 seconds or more and more frequently than normal.

Other customer facing staff that are not on board one of these transport modes (e.g. staff at a train station) should comply with the public health guidance applicable at the time, including principles of social distancing wherever possible.

You communicate that staff should move around the train, plane or ferry as little as possible to maintain distance from passengers. You increase the frequency of cleaning procedures on board and in terminal or stations areas, to ensure all areas are disinfected as often as is feasible.

Use of private vehicles and car-pooling

When using a private vehicle to make a journey that is essential, cars should only be shared by members of the same household. Those who normally share a car with people who are not members of their own household for a journey that is essential, e.g. getting to work, should consider alternatives such as walking, cycling and public transport where you maintain a distance of 2 metres from others.

If the journey is essential, such as travel to work, and there is no option but to share a car with people who are not part of the same household, journeys should be shared with the same individuals and with the minimum number of people at any one time.

Good ventilation (i.e. keeping the windows open) and facing away from each other may help to reduce the risk of transmission. Private vehicles that are used by people from multiple households should be cleaned regularly using gloves and standard cleaning products with particular emphasis on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces.

UK Government advice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/COVID-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector/COVID-19-guidance-for-staff-in-the-transport-sector>

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Waste management businesses

Waste management is an important service for other businesses, public services and households. It can continue if done in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible. This applies if you operate a waste site where staff cannot be more than 2 metres apart at all times.

You should advise staff to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds more frequently than usual. Staff should also wash their hands each time before getting into enclosed machinery (such as fork lift trucks or crane grabbers), and wash their hands for 20 seconds or more, or use hand sanitiser when they cannot wash their hands, every time they get out.

To help with this, you should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser.

On waste sorting and picking lines, staff should observe the same rules as for Manufacturing. You should allow frequent cleaning and disinfecting of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using standard cleaning products, particularly at the end and beginning of shifts.

When staff are sharing an enclosed space, such as in refuse and waste collection vehicle cabs and are unable to maintain a 2-metre distance, they should wash their hands for 20 seconds or longer before getting into, or after getting out of, the vehicle, or use hand sanitiser where hand washing is not possible.

Where it is not possible to avoid having more than one person in the vehicle, teams should keep the windows of the vehicle open for ventilation and be careful to avoid touching their face at all times. Staff should still be advised to keep 2 metres apart as much as possible.

UK Government advice <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-COVID-19-advice-to-local-authorities-on-prioritising-waste-collections/guidance-on-prioritising-waste-collection-services-during-coronavirus-COVID-19-pandemic>

The Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum (WISH) https://wishforum.org.uk/?page_id=33



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[Speak to your Designated James Hallam Account Executive](#)

This advice provides good risk management guidance for unoccupied properties, however it is important that all businesses discuss this subject with your designated James Hallam Account Executive, as their advice may differ. Insurance requirements should be checked carefully in addition to this advice.

[About Us](#)

James Hallam Risk Management remain open during these unprecedented times, we provide advice to business small and large across the length and breadth of the UK. Whilst we are large enough to provide extensive range of risk management related services, we are small enough to provide a friendly and personal service that meets your company specific needs.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss the contents of this guidance document or discuss any other business risk management support or advice you may require.

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