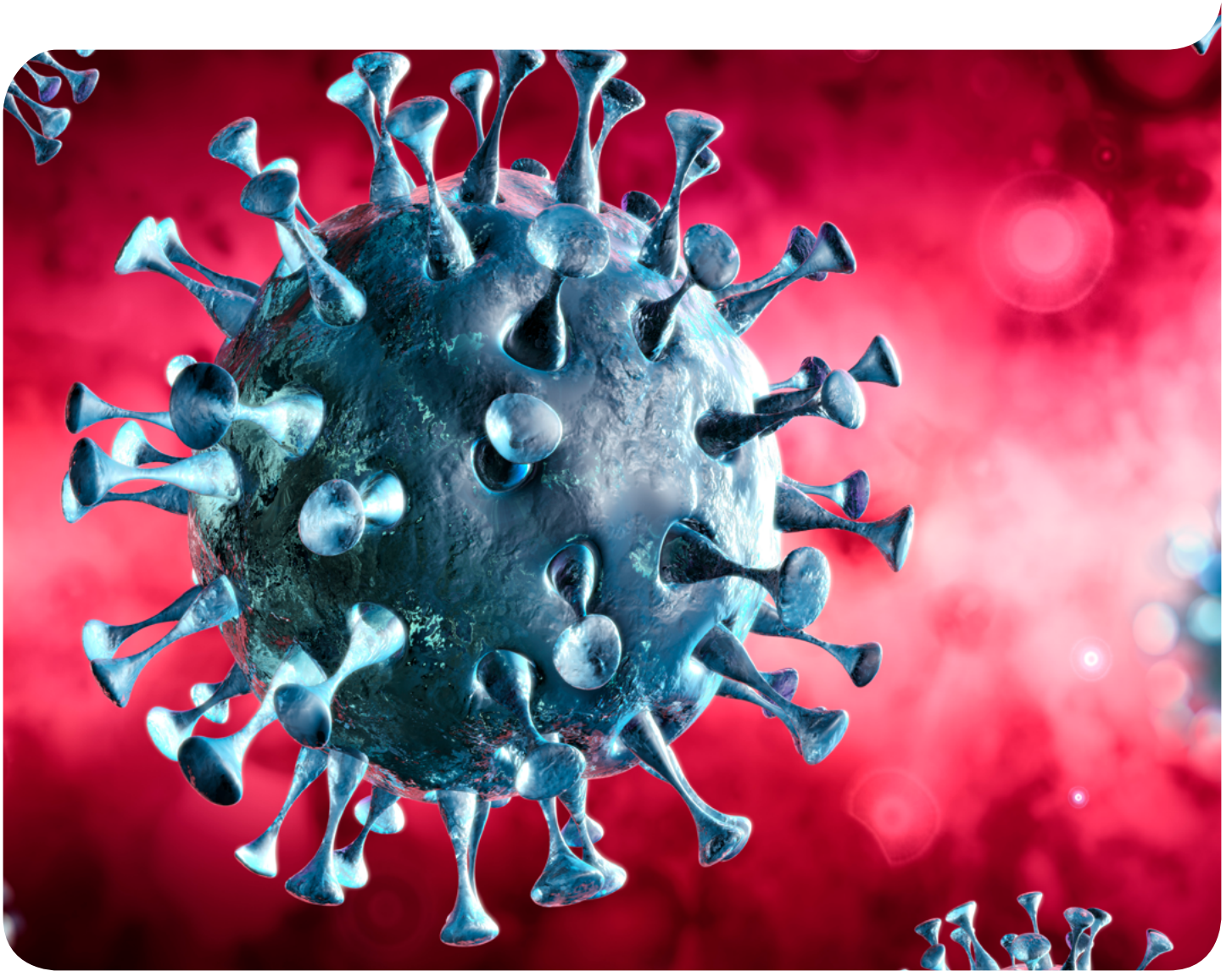


# Guidance for managing on site working during the COVID-19 outbreak



This **dhf** guidance document should be used in conjunction with any guidance/advice from the Government, which may change from time to time, as is the case with this document - please check for updates on the **dhf** website [www.dhfonline.org.uk](http://www.dhfonline.org.uk)

**THIS GUIDANCE IS INTENDED TO ASSIST COMPANIES AND INDIVIDUALS; IT DOES NOT FORM AN OFFICIAL PROCESS**

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Revision	Description	Date

## Introduction

The UK Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has made it clear that the contribution of the construction industry to the economy is important<sup>1</sup>. The construction industry has never been expected to shut down<sup>2</sup> but the relevant rules, including social distancing, must be complied with. It is not, however, always easy to see how any apparent conflicts are to be resolved.

**dhf** has brought together best practice from a number of sources to enable managers and supervisory staff to help protect themselves, employees, clients and the public during the COVID-19 outbreak in the UK. It is important to remember that lockdown in England allows limited exceptions, including going to work.

<sup>1</sup> <https://builduk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Secretary-of-State-Letter-to-UK-Construction-Industry.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Different rules apply in Scotland, where only essential construction work is permitted.

This is encouraged in cases where all the following conditions apply:

- The work activity cannot reasonably be done from home
- The work activity has not been ordered to cease
- Travelling to work/site can be done in accordance with the relevant guidance on social distancing etc
- The work activity itself can be carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance on social distancing.

There are now considerable differences between the advice being given in the various parts of the UK. Companies and individuals operating outside of England are strongly advised to check for local guidance:

- Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-construction-sector-guidance/>
- Wales: <https://gov.wales/taking-all-reasonable-measures-maintain-physical-distancing-workplace>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nibusinessinfo.co.uk/content/coronavirus-workplace-safety-guidelines-and-social-distancing>

Companies and individuals operating in the Republic of Ireland are advised to check for specific national advice:

- Government advice: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>
- IE Construction Industry Federation advice: <https://cif.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CIF-Covid-19-Operating-Procedure-Report.pdf>

This **dhf** guidance document should be used in conjunction with any guidance/advice from the Government, which may change from time to time, as is the case with this document - please check for updates on the **dhf** website.

## References

Whilst **dhf** makes every effort to ensure that the guidance it offers is accurate and current, in this rapidly changing environment, companies should continue to check regularly as specific guidance may change.

This guidance was compiled using the following sources:

- UK Government (construction): <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Build UK daily updates: <https://builduk.org/coronavirus>
- Construction Leadership Council site operating procedures: <https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/site-operating-procedures-version-3-published/>
- UK Government extremely vulnerable groups: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
- UK Government increased risk groups: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>
- HSE COVID-19 guidance: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm>

## 1. Key Considerations

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a new (novel) Coronavirus virus called CoronavirusSARS-CoV-2. The virus is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or speaks and people are normally infectious until all the symptoms have gone. People of all ages can be infected by breathing in the virus when in the vicinity of a person who has COVID-19, or by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth before washing their hands. The virus can survive on some surfaces for up to 72 hours and people can be contagious whilst not displaying any symptoms at all. A combination of good personal hygiene and management of social distancing can help to prevent infection.

The following guidance is primarily based on advice for England; companies operating in other parts of the UK are strongly advised to check for local guidance (see the introduction on page 2 for regional links).

This guidance is intended to assist companies in revising operations in view of the COVID-19 outbreak such that industry can continue to function as safely and efficiently as possible.

## 2. Risk assessment review

The UK Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations require that a system of risk assessment and method statements (RAMS) should be used to manage health and safety at work at all times.

The regulations require that companies need to regularly review their RAMS system. One important trigger for a review is when there is a significant change in operating conditions; the COVID-19 outbreak is one such occasion. Existing risk assessment and method statements need to be reviewed to take account of the new risks presented by this outbreak and then shared with, and explained to, all employees.



### 3. Meetings, briefings and toolbox talks

Companies should remind their workforce (e.g. by holding daily briefings/toolbox talks) of the specific control measures necessary to protect themselves, their colleagues, their families and the UK population.



The measures necessary to minimise the risk of spread of infection rely on everyone in the industry taking responsibility for their actions and behaviours. Companies are encouraged to operate an open and collaborative approach between workers and employees on site where any issues can be openly discussed and addressed.

### 4. Workers showing symptoms at work

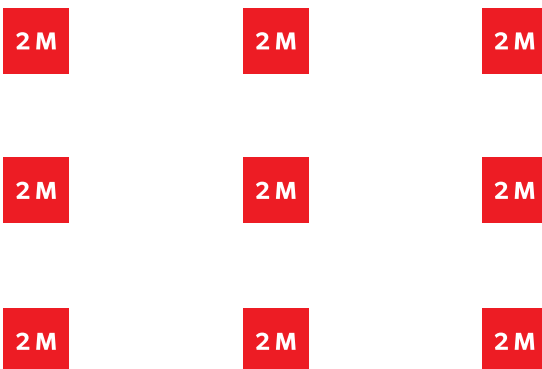
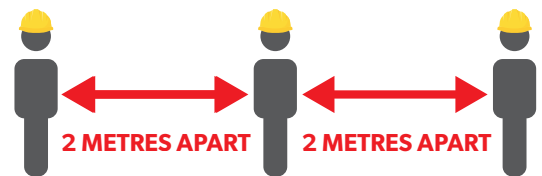
Planning should be in place to ensure that workers can be returned home in case of falling ill. Any worker who develops a high temperature or persistent cough during working hours should:

- inform their manager or supervisor and return home immediately
- avoid touching anything
- cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it straight into a bin, or cough into the crook of the elbow if no tissue is available
- follow self-isolation procedures

Any worker showing signs of COVID-19 (normally, but not exclusively, high temperature and persistent cough) should self-isolate for 7 days and not attend work until free of symptoms. If anyone in the household of a worker has shown symptoms, the worker should self-isolate for 14 days and not attend work.

Only participants that are necessary should attend:

- participants should be at least two metres apart from each other
- rooms should be well ventilated; doors or windows should be opened to allow fresh air circulation
- hold meetings in open areas wherever possible



### 5. Workers at increased risk

UK Government has identified two groups of people who are at an increased risk of severe illness due to COVID-19:

- any worker who falls into the UK Government-defined 'extremely vulnerable' category, must follow the advice on shielding and protecting
- any worker who falls into the UK Government-defined 'increased risk' category is strongly advised to work from home or, if not possible, be especially stringent in maintaining social distancing measures

Any worker who lives with a person who falls into either of the above categories should stringently follow social distancing guidelines and minimise all external contact.



## 6. Environments presenting increased risk

Certain increased-risk environments will require additional considerations:

- i. healthcare premises
- ii. residential care premises
- iii. premises where COVID-19 has been identified
- iv. premises where occupants fall into the vulnerable or extremely vulnerable categories

If the task is in an increased risk environment, then there is a need to reconsider the importance of the task, the vulnerability of the occupants and the welfare of workers:

- i. is the task essential?
- ii. can the problem be resolved another way, or at a better time?

Additional management, supervision and site precautions must be taken if the task is to proceed, such as keeping as much separation as possible between workers and occupants, reducing and isolating the number of workers involved, reducing the time spent in the environment and the use of suitable PPE such as disposable overalls, disposable gloves, eye protection and suitable face masks.

Where the task is in a healthcare establishment, take specific guidance on the required precautions from the healthcare professionals on site. If a worker feels unsafe or at risk at any point, they should undertake a personal risk assessment and leave the premises if necessary. The task can be re-planned for a future date if appropriate, after ensuring everything is made safe.

## 7. First aid and emergency services response

When planning tasks, employers should ensure that adequate first aid provision is made between the company and the client. In the event of an incident, first aid should always be administered to preserve life until the emergency services arrive. Additional guidance on safe protocols is available from the British Red Cross and St John's Ambulance.

When reviewing risk assessments to reflect the COVID-19 outbreak, employers should take account of the fact that emergency services' response times may be extended due to current pressures.

First aiders whose qualification expires, may be eligible for a 3-month extension where requalification cannot be achieved.

## 8. Site hygiene

Site hygiene should be enhanced during the outbreak.

### 8.1. Hand washing facilities

- Allow regular breaks to wash hands.
- Facilities should be provided for workers to regularly wash their hands with soap and water.
- Ensure adequate supplies of soap, fresh water and disposable (or individual personal) hand towels are always available.
- Where the provision of soap and water is not possible, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol must be provided as an alternative.
- Regularly clean the hand washing facilities, provide sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels and arrange for regular removal and disposal.

### 8.2. Toilet facilities

- Restrict the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time (e.g. use a welfare attendant) and use signage, such as floor markings, to ensure that at least 2 metres is maintained between people when queuing.
- Workers should wash or sanitise hands before and after using the facilities.
- Enhance the cleaning regimes for toilet facilities, particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush.
- Portable toilets should be avoided wherever possible but, where these are in use, they should be cleaned and emptied more frequently.
- Provide sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels and arrange for regular removal and disposal.

### 8.3. Site cleaning

Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across all work areas, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- i. taps and washing facilities
- ii. toilet flush and seats
- iii. door handles, push plates, handrails on staircases and corridors
- iv. telephones, keyboards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- v. machinery, plant and equipment controls

The Construction Plant-hire Association has issued plant hire-specific guidance that can be accessed here:

[https://www.cpa.uk.net/assets/js/tinymce/plugins/moxiemanager/data/files/Coronavirus%20Alerts\\_Updates/CPA%20Plant%20Supplement%20Site%20Operating%20Procedures%20April%202020.pdf](https://www.cpa.uk.net/assets/js/tinymce/plugins/moxiemanager/data/files/Coronavirus%20Alerts_Updates/CPA%20Plant%20Supplement%20Site%20Operating%20Procedures%20April%202020.pdf)

All areas used for eating must be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each break and shift, including chairs, door handles, vending machines and payment devices.

Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.

## 9. Travel to and from site

Wherever possible, travel should be made either in your own vehicle or single-occupancy work vehicle, using the same vehicle daily.

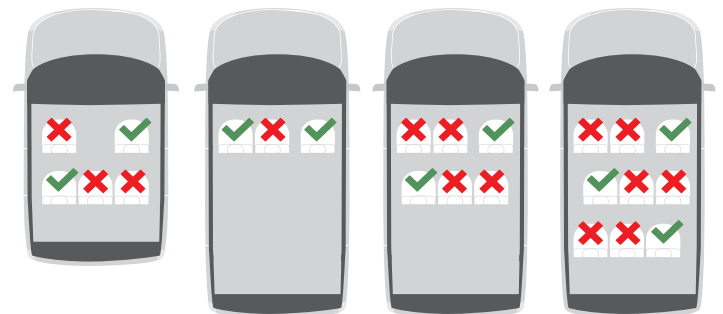
If this is not possible due to the nature of the task, the same operatives should be kept together in a fixed group or partnership, whilst travelling and on site. The fixed group should comprise the minimum number of operatives in the vehicle, always using the same vehicle, while maintaining the maximum possible distance with good ventilation, preferably with windows open.

Although vehicle sharing is, in theory, possible in exceptional circumstances, it should not be routine.

Government advice indicates that employers should minimise the number of people who travel together in any one vehicle, keeping occupants in fixed groups or partnerships whilst travelling and on site, increasing ventilation wherever possible and avoiding sitting face-to-face.

**Table 1 - Vehicle Seating Arrangements**

Vehicle	Seats	Occupants	Arrangement
Car or small van	2/5	1/2	Driver & opposite rear passenger
Van	3	2	Driver & far passenger
Crew cab	5	2	Driver & opposite rear passenger
People carrier	9	3	Driver & opposite rear passengers



Vehicles should be regularly cleaned using disposable gloves and standard cleaning products, particularly handles and surfaces which operatives regularly touch:

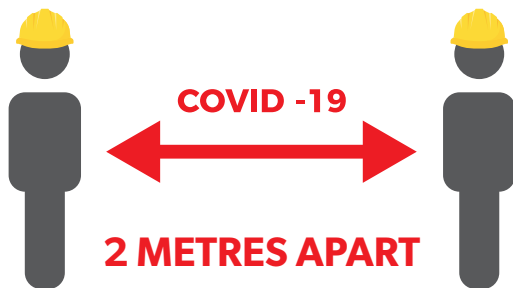
- steering wheel
- gearstick
- handbrake
- door handles & window controls
- radio & information controls
- steering column & controls (indicators, windscreen wipers, cruise control etc)
- elbow rests
- seat position controls
- door frames

Occupants should wash their hands for 20 seconds prior to entering the vehicle and on leaving the vehicle.

Avoid hand to face contact whilst in the vehicle.

## 10. Social distancing

Wherever possible, tasks should be rearranged to ensure at least 2m is maintained between workers at all times.



### 10.1. Work planning to avoid close working (less than 2m)

Government advice indicates that, where the 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 employees.

### 10.2. Hierarchy of control measures

In line with Government guidelines, where it is not possible to follow the social distancing guidelines in full for a particular task, companies should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the site to continue to operate; if it does, they should take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission or infection.

Where the task prevents maintaining a minimum 2 metre distance, and if it must continue, the risk assessment and method statement should be revised applying the 'ERIC' hierarchy of control measures system: 1st Eliminate it at all possible - 2nd Reduce exposure as much as possible - 3rd Isolate those affected - 4th Control the exposure. All four steps must be considered and applied, wherever possible to do so.

As will be seen, whilst working through the steps, there are some serious implications involved in close working so, whenever possible, it should be avoided; close working should only ever be the exception, not the rule.

#### 10.2.1. Step 1 Eliminate close working

Wherever possible, the task should be rearranged to enable it to be done by one person or, to restore social distancing (minimum 2 metres between workers), consider:

- alternative handling methods
- alternative access equipment
- additional use of mechanical aids

#### 10.2.2. Step 2 Reduce close working

Wherever possible, the task should be rearranged to reduce the risk of transmission and the time workers will need to be less than 2 metres apart:

- minimise the number of workers involved in the task
- reduce the time spent within 2 metres
- arrange workers to operate side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face
- prevent skin on skin contact

#### 10.2.3. Step 3 Isolate close working

Wherever possible, workers that do need to be within 2 metres of each other should be isolated in a fixed group or partnership:

- maintain the fixed group; do not change workers between groups or partnerships
- keep the group as small as possible
- keep fixed groups or partnerships away from other workers, including when travelling

#### 10.2.4. Step 4 Control close working

Wherever workers need to operate within 2 metres of each other, additional control measures should be put in place:

- keep face-to-face time to an absolute minimum
- increase ventilation in enclosed space
- consider an enhanced authorisation or permit system for these activities
- provide additional supervision to monitor and manage compliance

#### 10.2.5. Step 5 Provide suitable PPE

Government advice indicates that employers should not encourage the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings, or when responding to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19. It goes on to explain that unless workers are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, the risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is extremely limited. They also point out however, that if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then employers must provide it free of charge to workers who need it and that any PPE provided must fit properly.

### 10.2.5. Step 5 Provide suitable PPE continued

Any activity involving working within 2 metres should already have been risk assessed using the 1-4 (ERIC) hierarchy of controls to reduce the number of people affected, degree of exposure, orientation of those affected and the time spent within 2 metres, before the use of PPE is even considered.

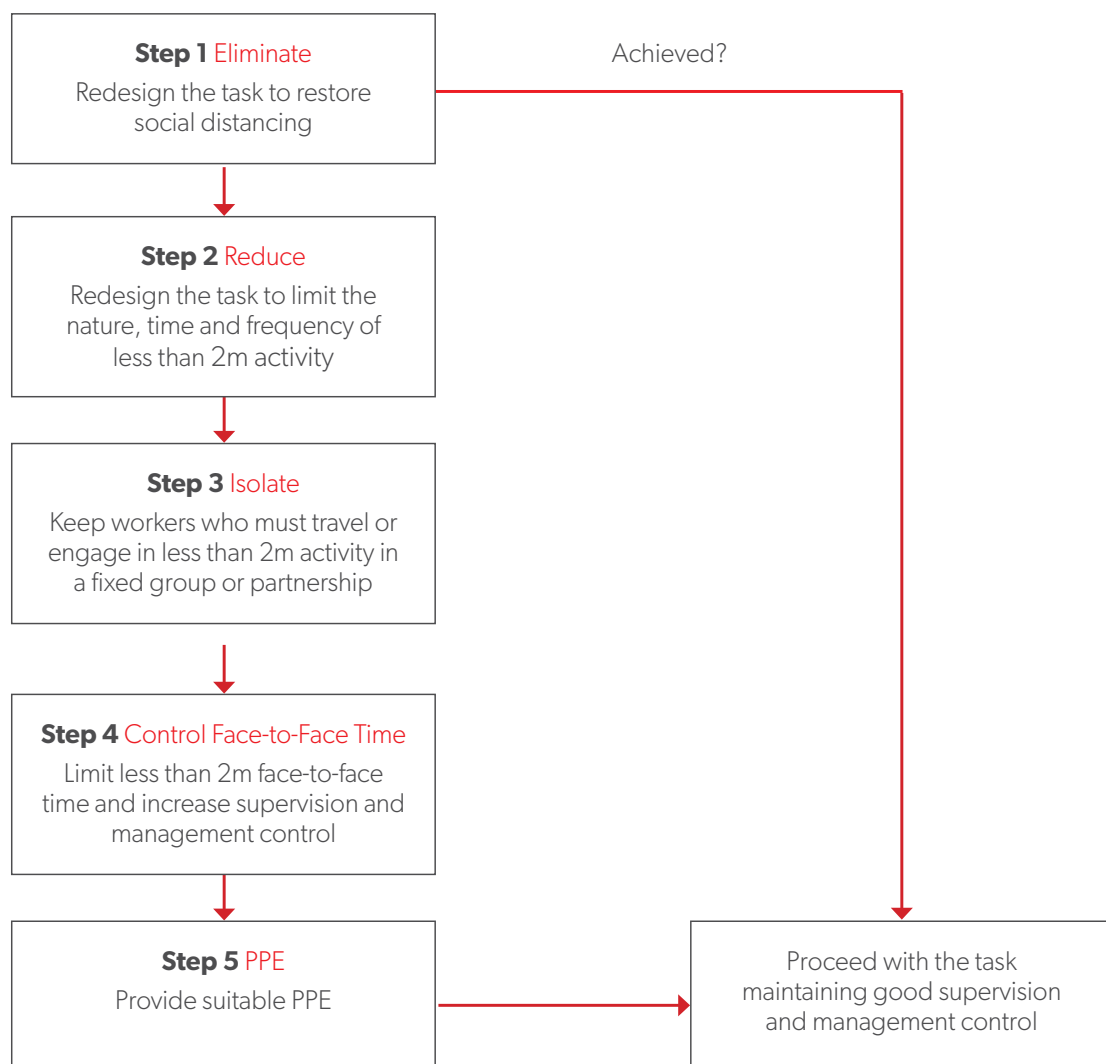
There are some circumstances when wearing mouth, nose and eye coverings may be beneficial as a precautionary measure where close working cannot be avoided. The evidence suggests that wearing mouth and nose covering does not protect the wearer. However, it may offer a degree of protection to others if the wearer is infected but has not yet developed symptoms. Eye protection in the form of a visor or similar can help prevent incoming droplets reaching the eyes of the wearer. In combination, these two measures seem to offer a degree of mitigation that is relatively simple to implement.

PPE used to control working within 2 metres, such as disposable overalls, disposable gloves, eye protection and suitable face coverings must be carefully managed to prevent cross contamination. It must be understood that face coverings are potentially hazardous, they promote face touching when putting on, removing and adjusting.

Users should:

- i. wash their hands before putting on
- ii. wash their hands before removal, and
- iii. not touch their face whilst wearing the face covering!

Reusable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers and single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused.





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## 11. Precautions for working in client premises (including dwellings)

On the day of the task, call ahead to the site and check that the premises are not a higher risk environment (according to section 5) and that clients/occupants are comfortable with the task taking place. Ask site management about the particular COVID-19 precautions that need to be followed on their site and apply them in full.

Explain to the client/occupants what you will be doing and why, and that you must maintain social distancing from them (at least 2 metres) at all times, and do not shake hands with anyone.

If the task involves going inside, advise the occupants to stay in another room, or well away from the work area(s) whilst the work proceeds and, with permission, ventilate the work area, e.g. by opening doors and windows.

Advise occupants to keep clear of the work area for at least 30 minutes after workers leave and then wipe down all surfaces and handles with soap and water and disinfect these surfaces with the cleaning products they normally use and then wash their hands for at least 20 seconds

Workers should wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, at the start of the task, as required during the task, and on completion of the task. Where soap and water are not available, provide an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol as an alternative.

Avoid client/worker signatures. Use another system using text, email or photographs; an electronic copy can be sent on the day, or at a later date (use and/or sharing of pens, tablets or mobile phones may pose a risk of contamination/infection).

Workers should avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth, unless they have just washed their hands.

## 12. Task completion

Wipe down equipment and tools and plant used.

Remove and place into a plastic bag any wipes, disposable gloves and overalls used, whilst trying not to cross-contaminate onto existing clothes or persons, do not touch your face.

Wash your hands and, where appropriate, any reusable PPE (e.g. safety glasses) using soap and water. Where the provision of soap and water is not possible, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol as an alternative.

At the end of each day, and following the appropriate local waste regulations, dispose of any bagged waste in line with any existing business process and/or Government guidance.

## 13. COVID-19 Checklist

To be used in conjunction with **dhf** advice on working during the COVID-19 outbreak

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Company .....

Job Ref:..... Date.....

Engineers .....

COVID-19 Checklist	YES/NO
Have all workers been adequately briefed on the increased risks presented by COVID-19?	
Are all workers being assessed for signs or symptoms of COVID-19?	
In the event of a worker falling ill at work, is there provision to return them home safely?	
Have all workers been assessed in terms of the government 'extremely vulnerable' and 'increased risk' categories?	
Have all risk assessments and method statements (RAMS) been revised to accommodate the COVID-19 outbreak?	
Has first aid provision been reviewed/revised?	
Have handwashing facilities been reviewed/revised?	
Have toilet facilities been reviewed/revised?	
Has cleaning and sanitising material provision been reviewed/revised?	
*Has the site COVID-19 risk been identified (e.g. does it present an increased COVID-19 risk)?	
Has social distancing during travel been reviewed/revised?	
Has social distancing during the task(s) been reviewed/revised?	
Where social distancing <i>cannot</i> be maintained, has the task been reviewed for importance to continue?	
Where social distancing <i>cannot</i> be maintained, has the task been reduced & isolated as far as possible?	
Where social distancing <i>cannot</i> be maintained, is the task subject to increased supervision and management control?	
Has PPE provision been reviewed/revised?	
Is the task cleared to continue?	

\*Sites which are considered increased risk include healthcare premises, residential care premises, premises where COVID-19 has been identified, and where occupants are in Government defined extremely vulnerable or increased risk groups.

Supervisor/manager: .....

When the processes in this document have been followed and implemented, which includes checking that this advice and Government advice is up to date, the company should be able to complete the Government-advised certificate

## Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

● FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER ●

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

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Who to contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Your Health and Safety Representative  
(or the Health and Safety Executive at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or 0300 003 1647)

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