

## **Working Safely in Warehouses**

We want to ensure that you are aware of the current guidance that is available to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely in the warehouse sector during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initial government guidance from 14<sup>th</sup> June 2020 for this sector is available at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>

This document may be updated over time and you should check for updates at [www.gov.uk/workingsafely](http://www.gov.uk/workingsafely).

It is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations relating to health & safety and other employment legal responsibilities.

### **1. Continue to work from home, if you can**

Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option.

### **2. Check the maintenance of your premises and equipment.**

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE) has published information on work equipment and machinery during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including on air conditioning and ventilation. Guidance can be found at:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/index.htm>

If your business has been closed for any length of time check the safety of your water supply and prevention of Legionella. Links to guidance are available on the Think Sandwell website for managing Legionella

<https://www.thinksandwell.com/coronavirus-support-for-sandwell-businesses-returning-safely-to-work/>

### **3. Carry out a COVID-19 risk assessment, in consultation with employees or trade unions.**

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) have guidance on working safely during Covid-19 and how to undertake a risk assessment on their website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>

- Assess the risks of COVID 19 in your specific workplace.
- Put in COVID 19 control measures
- Communicate with your employees, agency workers, contractors, customers and other people.
- Monitor the control measures, review and update your risk assessment making improvements where necessary.

The HSE has guidance on their website for talking to your workers at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/talking-with-your-workers.pdf>

#### **4. In every workplace, you should increase the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning. Reinforce cleaning processes.**

Workplaces should be cleaned more frequently, paying close attention to high-contact objects like door handles, printers etc. and frequent cleaning of work / break areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products. Employers should provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers at entry and exit points.

Employees should wash their hands more frequently for at least 20 seconds. Use signs to remind employees.

If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID 19 then refer to the specific guidance at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>

#### **5. Maintain 2 metres social distancing, wherever possible**

Think about how you will need to re-design workspaces to maintain 2 metre distances between people; for example: staggering start times, creating one-way walk-throughs, opening more entrances and exits, changing seating layouts in break rooms, appointment times, using signage, minimise the number of unnecessary visits to the workplace, revising pickup and drop off collection points, use signage and markings. Each business needs to consider what will work for them.

#### **6. Where people cannot be 2 metres apart, manage the transmission risk.**

Some aspects of the business may need to be changed or stopped if transmission risks can't be controlled. Consider putting barriers or screens in shared spaces; creating workplace shift patterns or fixed teams minimising the number of people in contact with one another; or ensuring colleagues are facing away from each other; keeping the activity time involved as short as possible depending on the nature of the business.

No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

#### **7. Protect your employees, including clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable individuals.**

Further guidance can be found at

<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>

and

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing>

Monitor the health and wellbeing of employees to make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under existing government guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID 19, those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms and those who are advised to self-isolate as part of the government's test and trace service.

Further guidance can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance>

If there is more than one case of COVID-19 associated with a workplace, employers should contact their local health protection team to report the suspected outbreak. More information can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-workplace-guidance>

## **8. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID 19 risks, you should continue to do so. However, COVID 19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering.

There is specific Government advice on PPE in factories, plants and warehouses at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>

and in non-health care sectors on the HSE website at

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/non-healthcare/index.htm>

**Other resources** which you may find useful:

**Health and Safety Executive (HSE)** You can contact HSE by phone on 0300 790 6787 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 8pm) to get advice on protecting people from coronavirus in your workplace. Alternatively you can use their Working Safely Enquiry form found at <https://hsegov.microsoftcrmportals.com/workingsafelyenquiries/>

The **Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)** resources which can be found at <https://www.cieh.org/policy/coronavirus-covid-19/>

### **Business Representative Organisations and Trade Associations**

The Government are providing links to business representative organisations and trade associations guidance at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-support-from-business-representative-organisations-and-trade-associations>

For more information contact the Citizen and Consumer Protection Team on the EHTS Enquiries email: [EHTS\\_Enquiries@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:EHTS_Enquiries@sandwell.gov.uk)