



## Post-coronavirus start-up guidance: Builders merchants

Builders merchants and materials supply may now be permitted to reopen following the enforced Covid-19 partial or full shutdown.

In many cases business owners and staff will be returning to work and their premises for the first time in weeks. Reopening the business for trading and activating building services, plant and equipment needs to be planned to resume activities in a controlled and safe manner. Each business will need to be individually risk assessed to establish specific needs and the guidance given below covers some of the main areas to consider.

**These guidelines do not override any existing policy conditions.**

All applicable health & safety legislation and regulations remain fully in force, including but not limited to:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order.

**The fact that a business is deemed essential, or is permitted to operate, does not mean its legal obligations are in any way relaxed or reduced. Indeed, in the present climate the duties owed to employees and others are enhanced. All activities must only be undertaken in line with the current guidance issued by HM Government.**

### Risk management measures

**Activities: First and foremost, customer and employee safety is paramount.** It is important that a review of your working activities is undertaken before restarting any work, as this will form part of your Covid-19 Compliance risk assessment. You must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment - this means looking at working areas and activities to enable your employees to successfully distance themselves from customers and colleagues and work safely. It may not be appropriate to carry out certain activities as you normally would, and / or you may need to consider supplying PPE equipment to certain employees. Please see the latest Government and HSE advice for updates on appropriate precautions.

**Please remember that if some activities cannot be carried out safely, they should not be undertaken at all.**

You must reinduct your employees to ensure that they understand new restrictions, new rules, and altered arrangements for using welfare facilities, and you may need to operate out of hours and/or, introduce shift patterns, to manage safely the social distancing elements of the Covid-19 guidelines.

**Please click on the headings below for links to further information:**

[Social Distancing in the Workplace Guidelines](#)

[HSE Coronavirus information](#)

[HSE Advice on Social Distancing](#)

[Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

[HSE Working safely during Coronavirus](#)



# Coronavirus Response

## Consultation

Employers should consult with employees and trade unions about the return to the workplace. In the meantime staff should continue to work from home if they can.

Employers should keep up to date with the latest government guidance to help them plan ahead.

When planning to return to the workplace, employers must:

- consult with staff and employee representatives, including any trade union representatives and health and safety officials
- consider the risks of anyone being harmed in the workplace and carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment
- make the workplace as safe as possible for staff, customers and other visitors

Some employees may be anxious about their safety when returning to the workplace. Employers and employees should talk about any concerns and try to resolve them together. It can also help to signpost staff to any health and wellbeing support that is available, for example occupational health or mental health services.

## PPE

- **You must ensure that you have adequate supplies of PPE.** Some items of PPE are in very short supply, particularly FFP Masks and certain types of gloves - employees must not be put at risk because there is no PPE to wear for hazards in the workplace. Activities must not be undertaken if there is no PPE available.

## You must consider and manage the following:

- Update your risk assessments and working procedures in respect of the Covid-19 amendment.
- Confirm that your employees have had training refreshed in respect of Covid-19 for risk assessments and method statements.
- Confirm that you have and can supply/provide the correct PPE where this is required for work related activities.
- Ensure that all employees are symptom-free and have not been in contact within the last 14 days with someone who has had, or is suspected to have had, Covid-19 or someone who has been required to self-isolate with suspected Covid-19.
- In addition, anyone who is classed as a vulnerable person, through age, ill health condition, pregnancy, or who is a carer for someone who is vulnerable, should remain away from work.
- Inform your insurer that you are operational, and following specific guidance issued by HM Government and the HSE in respect of Covid-19.
- Confirm that all relevant insurance policies areas still in force and the limits of indemnity remain as before the crisis.





# Coronavirus Response

## Document the following:

**Assess:** review all areas of work activity, look for contact points between employees and others, possibly any members of the public, delivery drivers and consider/re-assess if these can be managed within the current social distancing guidelines. Update your risk assessments to reflect any changes.

**Train and inform:** communicate with your employees, about what the new changes may mean, ensure that employees fully understand, and above all document and record all training and information going forward.

**Clean:** review welfare arrangements and facilities provided - can social distancing be achieved in washrooms and dry canteen facilities? You may need to stagger the use of these facilities and may need to supervise or control access and egress.

All actions, systems and procedures must be documented – you may be required to produce evidence of compliance to a regulator.

## Cleaning - general guidance applicable to all locations

- Think about your business/site/building and the layout of your premises, prior to opening for business - if your risk assessment identifies cleaning before opening you should only consider cleaning surfaces yourself if you have the correct protective equipment and materials to hand or these are readily available.
- We also understand that businesses may wish to use a service delivery option to do this work for them ahead of opening.
- Prepare a schedule of cleaning steps covering the following:
  - » Access and egress routes, what could anyone have touched?
  - » Always work from clean to dirty areas, to avoid spreading any contamination.
  - » Door handles, letterboxes, finger plates, keypads, glass surfaces and floors - these are just a few areas but may well differ from premises to premises.
  - » Forklift trucks - controls, steering wheel.
  - » Pallet barrows - handles of trucks.
  - » Countertops.
  - » Touchscreens.
  - » Chip and PIN machines.
  - » Washrooms, WC's, and shower rooms should be subjected to a deep clean, especially if they are/have been available for public use.
  - » Phones, PC's, keyboards, desks and vending machines, chip and PIN pads.
  - » Kitchen areas, taps, fridges.
  - » Wear protective gloves and thoroughly sanitise door handles, keypads and hard surfaces - glass panels, mirrors etc that people may have touched.
  - » Although the Covid-19 virus cannot survive long on hard surfaces it is advised these should be cleaned/sanitised thoroughly.
  - » Use a proprietary sanitiser/wipes where possible to clean before you open to employees and/or the general public.
  - » Flush toilets, run taps and showers which have been unused for some weeks, multiple times to minimise the risk of legionella. Ensure shower heads are properly cleaned.



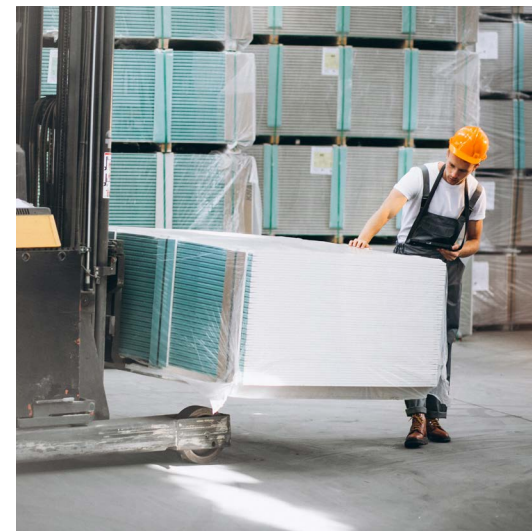
# Coronavirus Response

## Deliveries to stores

- Think about products/goods deliveries and how you limit your employee exposure - ideally these need to be managed, so that social distancing can be exercised between storemen and delivery drivers.
- Delivery drivers must remain in the cab, unless they require access to welfare facilities or to assist with releasing securing straps on loads and curtains, and then only by permission of the person in charge of receiving deliveries.
- Storemen should remove goods either by forklift truck or pallet truck.
- If more than one storeman is involved social distancing should be achieved by staggering offloading. This will be longer but keeps your employees safe.
- There may be several deliveries to build up stock depleted prior to the shutdown - it is important that vehicular traffic is managed so that congestion and risk of accident is avoided.
- High visibility clothing must always be worn in stores and yard areas.
- Ideally deliveries should be scheduled to avoid congestion and offloading and handling problems where this is possible.
- Over-accumulation of materials and products needs to be considered carefully, and it is worthwhile arranging with manufacturers and suppliers to see if they can deliver directly to the customer at their location, or site, to avoid the need to transit through your premises.
- Avoid overloading of storage racking and build-up of any flammable substances and materials.

## External deliveries to customers

- Deliveries from the yard and stores to the customer must follow a strict protocol, to ensure social distancing and keep delivery drivers safe.
- Ensure that the delivery vehicle is roadworthy, and that pre-start vehicle checks have been carried out.
- Check that the HI-AB Crane and or tail lifts are operational, are within the statutory test period, and have a valid test certificate.
- Ensure that the vehicle is licensed for the road and has not been subject to a Statutory off-road notification (SORN) before the vehicle is operated.
- If using agency drivers to supplement through the initial busy period, ensure they are licensed and that you have checked all statutory documentation relating to their vehicle.
- Provide employees with PPE, disposable gloves, hand sanitiser and wipes.
- Vehicle cabs and handles, steering wheel and touch points must all be wiped down before first use and at regular intervals thereafter.
- Driver must ensure social distancing when making deliveries, and ensure that customers personnel at deliver point either offload the materials themselves whilst the driver remains in the cab, or if the driver must use the HI AB Crane, that he/she is able to socially distance themselves during the delivery operation.
- It is critical that a thorough review of delivery options is carried out before the premises is opened, and a risk assessment for the Covid-19 situation is completed for all delivery scenarios. It may be likely that some deliveries cannot be managed, and you may have to limit what you can do safely without putting employees or third parties at risk.
- All delivery drivers must be thoroughly briefed and made aware of the new arrangements and outcomes of the risk assessment - all training and briefing must be recorded.

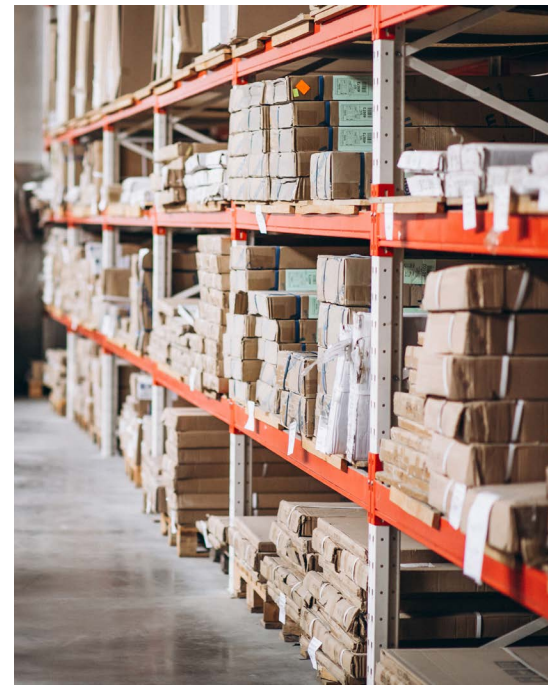




# Coronavirus Response

## Picking-up points

- Tradesmen and public undertaking DIY may wish to pick up materials using their own vehicles. This must be managed to comply fully with social distancing and reduce the risk of exposure to your own employees.
- To manage this consider operating a pay-and-collect approach, or online ordering, so that you are minimising the time and contact points for your employees and members of the trade/public to will come on to your premises to collect materials.
- Use Chip and PIN card readers to avoid handling cash.
- Implement a time slot arrangement, via a call or text service, so that customers only come to your premises when the order is ready to collect. This way you can control the number of people coming on to your premises and ensure social distancing measures are maintained.
- If tradesmen are turning up at your premises to collect smaller items, or browse, it is advisable to implement a one in, one out policy and that you mark the floor out at 2-metre intervals to ensure distancing is maintained.
- Staff must be trained to understand that they cannot interact with customers inside the 2-metre distance.
- Counters and worktops must be regularly cleaned and sanitised throughout the day.
- Car parks and queuing arrangements must be managed - parking bays need to be separated so that a bay's width is maintained between parked vehicles.
- Queues must be managed to maintain social distancing measures and need to be managed.
- Review workplace transport safety and ensure this takes account of increased presence of cyclists as employees find alternative means of transportation to and from work.



## Operational procedures, refresh induction and toolbox talks

- Given that normal business operations have been suspended for some time due to the Covid-19 restrictions, it is appropriate to ensure that, where practical, key operational rules and procedures are refreshed once employees return to work.
- The frequency of toolbox talks needs to be increased, especially for an initial period following the return to work, as employees need to understand that operational practices and policies have changed and this needs to be reiterated to ensure understanding.
- Key areas to think about will be:
  - » Fire alarm testing and associated procedures.
  - » Fire points and the provision of portable fire extinguishers & hose reels.
  - » Premises security issues.
  - » Manual handling and lifting.
  - » Pedestrian and vehicular interfaces.
  - » Managing the public.
  - » Personal safety.
  - » Forklift truck operations need to be monitored, to ensure operators are actively following their training, and that skill loss has not become apparent during the recent period of inactivity.



# Coronavirus Response

## Premises opening

On reopening a business following temporary full or partial shutdown, the following precautionary measures will assist in mitigating potential losses and further disruption:

- Undertake a thorough inspection of the perimeter security including fences, gates, doors, windows, shutters etc to ensure they are undamaged and locking devices are serviceable.
- Inspect the building for any signs of damage or deterioration and arrange for remedial repairs as necessary.
- Fire alarm systems, access control, CCTV systems, intruder alarms, fire doors (including self closers), fire extinguishers, fire dampers and emergency lighting/signage and emergency exits should be checked and tested to ensure they are fully operational and, where required, arrange for a service or emergency visit to rectify faults.
- Review the alarm keyholders, to ensure adequate coverage is provided and ensure the intruder and fire alarm system Alarm Receiving Centres are informed of any changes.
- Fixed automatic fire suppression systems, such as wet chemical systems to commercial cooking ranges, should be checked to ensure they are serviceable and when in doubt arrange a service visit by the installer.
- Where automatic fire sprinklers systems are installed, please refer to the separate detailed guidance note.
- Reinstating building services where they had been shut down (heating, air conditioning, power supplies etc) and restarting processes, plant and machinery, should follow the OEM procedures by suitably trained and competent staff, to ensure this is undertaken safely to minimise hazards and avoid damage or injury.
- Where the incoming water supplies have been isolated at the stopcock and systems drained, reinstating and refilling should be conducted in a slow controlled manner, checking for any leaks and to avoid water hammer which can cause damage to pipes, connections and fittings.
- Resuming trading after a prolonged idle period may mean there are initially larger quantities of stock and supplies delivered to site until a normal routine can be re-established. This will need to be managed carefully and the following considered:
  - » Do not block fire escape routes and exits.
  - » Items should be stored in designated areas and away from potential ignition sources such as boilers, electrical switchgear and battery charging etc.
  - » Storage heights should be carefully monitored to ensure they do not exceed the allowable for effective sprinkler operation.
  - » General housekeeping will need to be managed.
- Waste storage and removal should be carefully managed, as part of general housekeeping on site. Frequency of waste collections may be less than necessary until normal services are fully resumed. Where additional arrangements are made to remove waste build-up, ensure you only use registered companies to avoid the potential risk of 'fly-tipping'. To check that a company is registered, go to the following [website](#).
- Taking shortcuts when reinstating utility services, or starting-up machinery that has been idle, should be avoided, as this could lead to costly further disruption to the business.

