

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Highways Safe Operating Procedures – Protecting our workforce guidance document

Authorised by: HSC Chair	Page: 1	Ref: HSC-OPP-COVID19-1
Author: CLC with HSC amends	Date: 24 th April 2020	Version: 1

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HSC Guidance: Highways safe operating procedures – Protecting our workforce guidance document

1 Introduction

This guidance is based upon the [Construction Leadership Council \(CLC\) Site operating procedures Version 3](#) published on 14th April 2020 and has been adapted for the highways sector, where appropriate.

These are exceptional circumstances and the industry must comply with the latest Government advice on Coronavirus (Covid-19) at all times.

These Highways Safe Operating Procedures (SOP) are based on current Public Health England (PHE) guidance; other restrictions and advice may apply in [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#) which must be followed if working in these areas.

Where workers enter people's homes, they should follow the PHE guidance on [Tradespeople and working in people's homes](#).

The [HSE](#) is the relevant enforcing authority for PHE guidelines. If a depot or site is not consistently implementing the measures set out by PHE, it may be subject to enforcement action.

For further guidance, please refer to HSE COVID-19 web page [HSE COVID-19 Latest Advice](#)
Note: COVID-19 has been classified as a Notifiable Disease under RIDDOR

Maintenance and repair depots and sites operating during the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic need to ensure they are protecting their workforce and the general public, as well as minimising the risk of spread of infection. This includes considering how personnel travel to and from site.

This guidance is intended to introduce consistent measures in depots and on sites of all sizes in line with the Government's recommendations on social distancing and ensure employers and individuals make every effort to comply.

PHE guidance for construction states "*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*".

The health and safety requirements of any construction activity must not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely, it should not take place.

We are aware that emergency services are also under great pressure and may not be able to respond as quickly as usual.

Please ensure first-aid requirements in the depots or on site are not compromised and be aware of the location of your local automatic emergency defibrillator ([AED locations](#)) if not on site/ in your depot / in your vehicle ([Resuscitation Council UK Statement on COVID-19 in relation to CPR and resuscitation in first aid and community settings](#))

Supervisory personnel at depots and work sites should remind the workforce before work commences every day and at all break times of these Highways Safe Operating Procedures which are aimed at protecting them, their colleagues, their families and the UK population.

If a depot or site is not consistently implementing the measures set out below, consideration is to be given to safely closing it down.

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2 When to Travel to Work

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy advised in a letter to the UK construction industry on 31 March 2020:

“that wherever possible, people should work at home. However, we know that for many people working in construction their job requires them to travel to their place of work, and they can continue to do so. This is consistent with the Chief Medical Officer’s advice”.

It is important to understand the following guidelines by which workers should or should not travel to work as outlined below.

Social distancing	Workers in the highways industry should follow the guidance on Staying at home and away from others (social distancing) . Where they cannot work from home, they must follow the same principles of social distancing whilst travelling to and from work and whilst at work.
Self-isolation	Anyone who either has a high temperature or a new persistent cough or is within 14 days of the day when the first member of their household showed symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) should not come to their respective depot or site, but must follow the guidance on self-isolation .
Person at increased risk	Anyone who is at increased risk of severe illness from Coronavirus (Covid-19) is strongly advised to work at home and should be particularly stringent about following social distancing measures.
People who are clinically extremely vulnerable	Anyone identified as clinically extremely vulnerable will be advised by their health authority and must follow the guidance on shielding and protecting clinically extremely vulnerable people .
Living with a person in one of the above groups	Anyone living with a person who is at increased risk of severe illness, or a clinically extremely vulnerable person who is shielding from Coronavirus (COVID-19), should stringently follow the guidance on social distancing and minimise contact outside the home.
If someone falls ill	<p>If a worker develops a high temperature or a persistent cough whilst at work, they should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure their manager or supervisor is informed • Return home immediately • Avoid touching anything • Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow. <p>They must then follow the guidance on self-isolation and not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed.</p>

3 Travel to depot/site

Wherever possible, workers should travel to the depot or site alone using their own transport or work assigned vehicle

If workers have no option but to share transport:

- 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. The vehicle should be cleaned regularly using gloves and standard cleaning products, with particular emphasis on handles and other areas where passengers may touch surfaces

Depots/sites need to consider:

- Parking arrangements for additional cars and bicycles
- Other means of transport to avoid public transport e.g. cycling and walking
- Providing hand cleaning facilities at entrances / exits to work depots/sites or within works vehicles. This should be soap and hot water wherever possible or hand sanitiser if water is not available
- Keep the numbers of people in working/travelling teams as low as possible (it won't always be possible to have solo vehicle use)
- Keep teams constant (don't split them up – where possible)
- Keep same teams with same vehicles where possible
- How someone taken ill would get home

Where public transport is the only option for workers, you should consider:

- Changing and staggering working hours to reduce congestion on public transport
- Avoid using public transport during peak times (05:45 – 07:30 and 16:00 – 17:30)

4 Driving at work

Private vehicles should not be used for business use without the appropriate business insurance cover. Note: commuting to and from work will be covered by personal insurance as this is not classed as business use

When travelling at work or between site locations, workers should travel alone. If workers have no option but to share a vehicle, then they should:

- Share with the same individuals and with the minimum number of people at any one time
- Wherever possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres and avoid touching their faces
- Maintain good ventilation (i.e. keeping the windows open) and face away from each other during the journey
- Wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available before entering and after getting out of the vehicle

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- Regularly clean the vehicle using gloves and standard cleaning products, with particular emphasis on handles and other surfaces which may be touched during the journey.

The following simple steps will help staff minimise the risk of contamination to anyone using works vehicles:

- Avoid all non-essential travel both by private or works vehicle
- Keep the time spent in the vehicle to a minimum – do not stop off or take the “long route” to the depot or the site
- All vehicle keys should be sanitized at the start and end of shift
- At the start of shift, clean the external handles and locks / catches on the vehicle with soap and water. If this is not practicable, then open external door handles using either a gloved hand, disinfectant wipes or disposable paper towel
- Remember to sanitize items of work equipment that may be used in the cabin of the vehicle such as mobile phones, tablets and cameras. Avoid passing these between occupants or using these inside the vehicle unless essential
- Where possible, maintain 2 metre social distancing if sharing vehicles. However, if this is not practicable you must sit as far apart within the vehicle cabin as possible. If 2 people are sharing a vehicle with front and rear seats (e.g. a car, welfare van or double crew cab) then one person should sit in the rear seat diagonally opposite the driver
- Where practicable, a temporary partition (e.g. suitable secured clean polythene sheet) may be installed in the vehicle between passengers to prevent the direct transmission of respiratory droplets between passengers. Partitions must not hinder visibility for the driver or hinder with essential driving controls. If the installation of screens is being considered, advice should be sought from the vehicle manufacturer/supplier or a suitably qualified and experienced vehicle engineer to ensure critical safety aspects are not compromised.
- Keep the windows at least partially open whilst travelling and the climate control system switched to blow external air to ensure continuous air change within the cabin area
- During the day, sanitize your hands regularly either by handwashing with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) or using hand sanitizer if available, every time you get into or out of the vehicle, every time you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
- Where possible, avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands and avoid touching the vehicle after sneezing or coughing until you have sanitized your hands
- If available, use disinfectant wipes to sanitize any areas of the vehicle that hands may typically touch including the steering wheel, gear stick, handbrake, indicator and wiper control arms, beacon switches, door handles, seat belts and buckles, window buttons, mirrors, stereo and climate control buttons

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- If wipes are not available, soap and water may be used but ensure it doesn't get into the vehicle's electrical systems and thoroughly dry items like the steering wheel before driving. Chlorine based cleaning products should only be used in accordance with the relevant COSHH assessment
- Always sanitize your hands after cleaning your vehicle - if your hands are dirty, you are putting germs right back onto that clean surface
- Aim to sanitise the vehicle regularly e.g. start of shift, before lunch and end of shift
- Do not eat or drink in the vehicle. Do not store food or drink directly on any surface in the cab unless you know that part of the cab and the food packaging has been cleaned beforehand
- Ensure you have a supply of clean tissue / paper towel and a waste bin/bag in your vehicle. Catch your cough or sneeze in a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin and sanitize your hands. Remove the bin bag at the end of your shift and dispose of it
- After exiting the vehicle, remove your clean gloves and leave them on a cleaned surface in the cabin
- Put on your work gloves and close the door using the outside of the door only – do not touch the inside of the vehicle.
- At the end of shift, take your clean gloves out of the vehicle with you. Unless damaged, these gloves do not need to be disposed of every time you remove them. Sanitize the external surface of the gloves by washing with soap and water.

In line with the latest [World Health Organisation Guidance](#), the wearing of masks in vehicles is not necessary provided that occupants have no symptoms of COVID-19. Public Health England (PHE) currently states: "We do not recommend the use of face masks as an effective means of preventing the spread of infection. Face masks play an important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals, but there's very little evidence of benefit from their use outside of these settings". Prolonged use of masks may also have problems. For example, wearers may be tempted to adjust the fit frequently risking hand to face contact, masks may become moist so trapping contaminants, germs and similar. Experience is that the prolonged use of RPE is unlikely to be effective. Further advice is available at [Public Health England Guidance \(Use of Face masks in the community\)](#). Please observe the previous advice in respect of coughs and sneezes, and always ensure excellent personnel hygiene as per the Government guidance e.g. washing hands etc. Remember to regularly sanitise the interior of the vehicle.

5 Depot/site access points

The following should be implemented at depot and site access / egress points and at maintenance works locations on the existing highway network:

- Stop all non-essential visitors
- Introduce staggered start and finish times at depots and sites to reduce congestion and contact

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- Monitor depot and site access points to enable social distancing – you may need to change the number of access points - either increase to reduce congestion or decrease to enable monitoring. Alternatively, consider dedicated entrance only/exit only locations
- Remove or disable entry systems that require skin contact e.g. fingerprint scanners. One person should be employed to collect names of persons entering and leaving depots and sites at an access or egress point (including depot gates)
- Require all workers to wash or clean their hands before entering or leaving the depot or site
- Allow plenty of space between people waiting to enter a depot or site. Use signage such as floor markings, to ensure 2 metre distance is maintained between people when queuing. Also use signage to remind workers not to attend if they have symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) and to follow guidelines.
- Where there are multiple crews, introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact
- Reduce the number of people in attendance at depot/site inductions and consider holding them outdoors wherever possible
- Where loading and offloading arrangements on site will allow it, drivers should remain in their vehicles. Where drivers are required to exit their vehicle, they should wash or sanitise their hands before handling any materials
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control, storage and delivery areas e.g. scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets, desks, particularly during peak flow times
- In the case of highway maintenance works, politely request that any approaching member of the public keep their distance from the immediate area until works are complete and workers have departed
- If the site-specific risk assessment for the intended highway maintenance activity indicates that social distancing from the general public cannot be achieved by temporary barriers and the like, consider whether there is scope to make any highway defect safe but do not otherwise proceed with any work. Advise the works supervisor/works scheduler of the circumstances, including whether a road or footway closure or other forms of traffic management are required

6 Hand washing

- Allow regular breaks to wash hands
- Provide dedicated hand washing facilities in addition to the usual welfare facilities if on a large footprint depot/site or there are significant numbers of personnel in the depot or on site
- Ensure soap and fresh water is always readily available
- Provide hand sanitiser (minimum 60% alcohol based) where hand washing facilities are unavailable

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- Regularly clean the hand washing facilities and check soap and sanitiser levels
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

7 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 2 metre distance is maintained between people when queuing
- Stop using urinals, please use the toilet cubicles. Alternatively, close off alternate urinals to ensure social distancing measures can be maintained
- Wash 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 in use these should be cleaned and emptied more frequently
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

8 Canteens and eating arrangements

Whilst there is a requirement for depot/sites to provide a means of heating food and making hot drinks, these are exceptional circumstances and where it is not possible to introduce a means of keeping equipment clean between use, kettles and microwaves etc. must be removed from use.

Where possible, workers should be encouraged to bring their own food. They should also be required to stay on site once they have entered it and avoid using local shops.

Where there are no practical alternatives, workplace canteens may remain open to provide food to staff with appropriate adjustments for social distancing. Canteens should provide a takeaway service providing pre-prepared and wrapped food only.

- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available in a depot or on site if possible
- The capacity of each canteen or rest area should be clearly identified at the entry to each facility, and where necessary attendants provided to supervise compliance with social distancing measures
- Dedicated eating areas should be identified in depots and on site to reduce food waste and contamination
- Break times should be staggered to reduce congestion and contact
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance of any room where people eat and should be used by workers when entering and leaving the area
- The workforce should be asked to bring pre-prepared meals and refillable drinking bottles from home
- Workers should sit 2 metres apart from each other whilst eating and avoid all contact - this may be 1 person per table

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- Where catering is provided on site it should provide pre prepared and wrapped food only:
 - Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible
- Crockery, eating utensils, cups etc. should be either disposable or should be brought by individuals from home and returned with them at the end of the working day for washing etc
- Drinking water should be provided, with enhanced cleaning measures for the tap mechanism
- Tables should be cleaned between each use
- All rubbish should be put straight in the bin and not left for someone else to clear up
- 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.
- Canteen staff should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food
- Canteen staff and workers may use rest areas if they apply the same social distancing measures
- Consider arrangements for monitoring compliance.

9 Changing facilities, showers and drying rooms

- Introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact
- Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day
- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available in the depot or on site if possible
- Based on the size of each facility, determine how many people can use it at any one time to maintain a distance of two metres
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins in these areas with regular removal and disposal
- If possible, workforce to take work clothes home to wash / clean there.

10 Work Planning to Avoid Close Working

In line with Public Health England (PHE) guidelines, 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.

Depots, sites and work locations (mobile, semi-static and static) need to be planned and organised to avoid crowding and minimise the risk of spread of infection by following PHE and HSE guidance and the advice within these Highways Safe Operating Procedures.

The workforce should be reminded (e.g. at daily briefings) of the specific control measures necessary to protect them, their colleagues, families and the UK population.

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Hierarchy of Controls

If you are not able to work whilst maintaining a 2 metre distance, you should consider whether the activity should continue and, if so, risk assess it using the hierarchy of controls below and against any sector-specific guidance.

<p>Eliminate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers who are unwell with symptoms of Coronavirus (COVID-19) should not travel to or attend the workplace • Rearrange tasks to enable them to be done by one person, or by maintaining social distancing measures (2 metres) • Avoid skin to skin and face to face contact • Stairs should be used in preference to lifts or hoists and consider one ways systems • Consider alternative or additional mechanical aids to reduce worker interface <p>Site Meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only absolutely necessary meeting participants should attend • Attendees should be at least two metres apart from each other • Rooms should be well ventilated / windows opened to allow fresh air circulation • Consider holding meetings in open areas where possible
<p>Reduce</p>	<p>Where the social distancing measures (2 metres) cannot be applied:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the frequency and time workers are within 2 metres of each other • Minimise the number of workers involved in these tasks • Workers should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face • Lower the worker capacity of lifts and hoists to reduce congestion and contact at all times • Regularly clean common touchpoints, doors, buttons, handles, vehicle cabs, tools, equipment etc. • Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces • Workers should wash their hands before and after using any equipment
<p>Isolate</p>	<p>Keep groups of workers that have to work within 2 metres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Together in teams e.g. (do not change workers within teams) • As small as possible • Away from other workers where possible
<p>Control</p>	<p>Where face to face working is essential to carry out a task when working within 2 metres:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep this to 15 minutes or less where possible • Consider introducing an enhanced authorisation process for these activities • Provide additional supervision to monitor and manage compliance

PPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites should not use respiratory protective equipment (RPE) for Coronavirus (COVID-19) where the 2 metre social distancing guidelines are met. • Where it is not possible to maintain a two-metre distance, each activity should be risk assessed using the hierarchy of controls and against any sector-specific guidance, mindful that masks (RPE) are the last resort in the hierarchy • Re-usable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers • Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused • Where personnel are required to work in specific environments (e.g. where persons are shielding, with symptoms, or confirmed Coronavirus (COVID-19) cases may be present e.g. healthcare or in a home environment) additional PPE should be considered specific to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk
Behaviours	<p>The measures necessary to minimise the risk of spread of infection rely on everyone in the industry taking responsibility for their actions and behaviours.</p> <p>Please encourage an open and collaborative approach between workers and employers on site where any issues can be openly discussed and addressed.</p>

11 First Aid and Emergency Service Response

The primary responsibility is to preserve life and first aid should be administered if required and until the emergency services attend. ([Resuscitation Council UK Statement on COVID-19 in relation to CPR and resuscitation in first aid and community settings](#))

- When planning site activities, the provision of adequate first aid resources must be agreed between the relevant parties on site
- Emergency plans including contact details should be kept up to date
- Consideration must also be given to potential delays in emergency services response, due to the current pressure on resources
- Consider preventing or rescheduling high-risk work or providing additional competent first aid or trauma resources.

12 Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across the depot/site, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- ✦ Taps and washing facilities
- ✦ Toilet flush and seats
- ✦ Door handles and push plates
- ✦ Hand rails on staircases and corridors
- ✦ Lift and hoist controls
- ✦ Machinery and equipment controls
- ✦ 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.
- ✦ Telephone equipment
- ✦ Keyboards, photocopiers and other office equipment

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

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