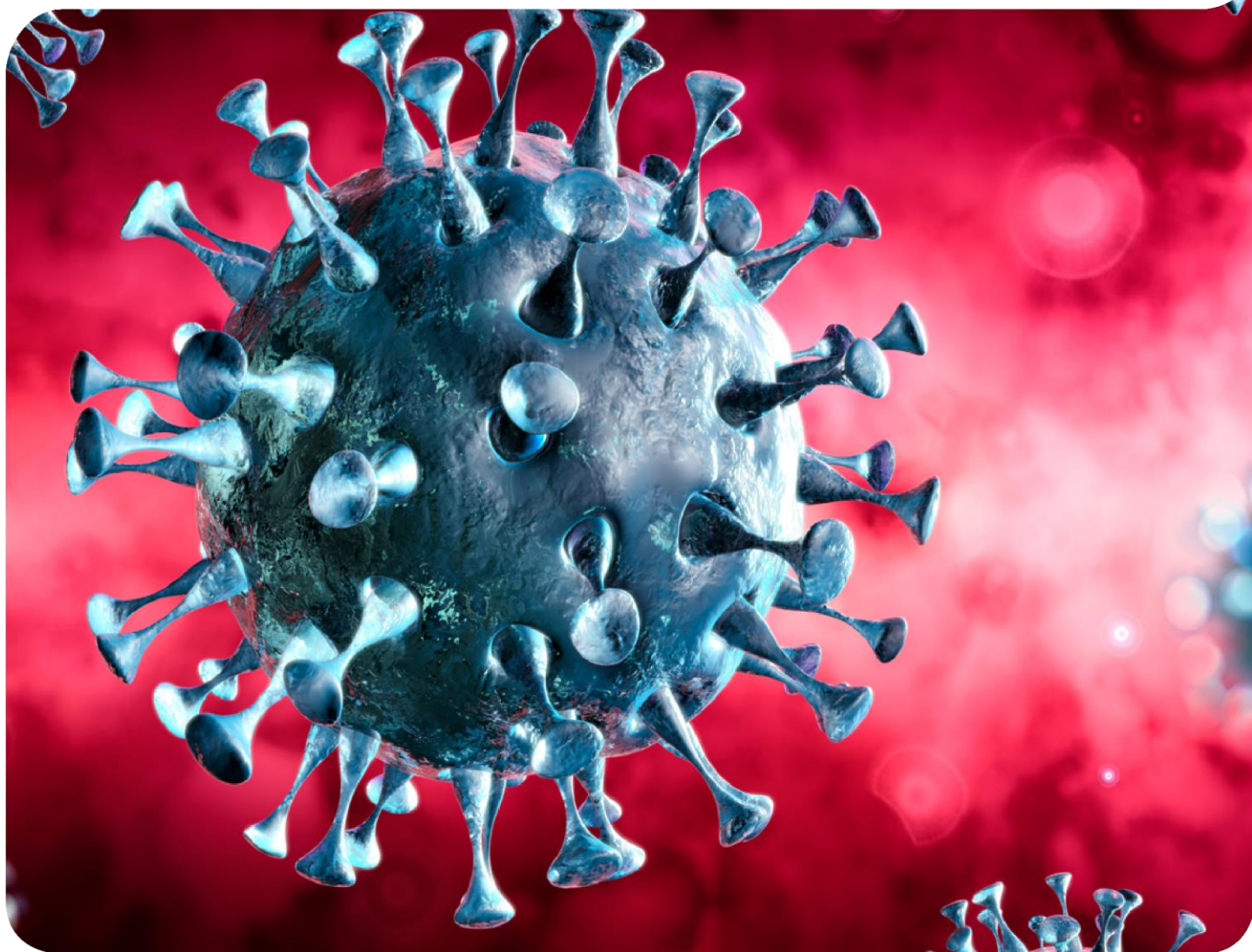


# Guidance for managing on site working during the COVID-19 outbreak – updated January 2021



This **dhf** guidance document may change from time to time – please check for updates at: [www.dhfonline.org.uk](http://www.dhfonline.org.uk)

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the current guidance provided by national governments

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Version 1	First published	May 2020
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## Introduction

**dhf** has brought together information 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.

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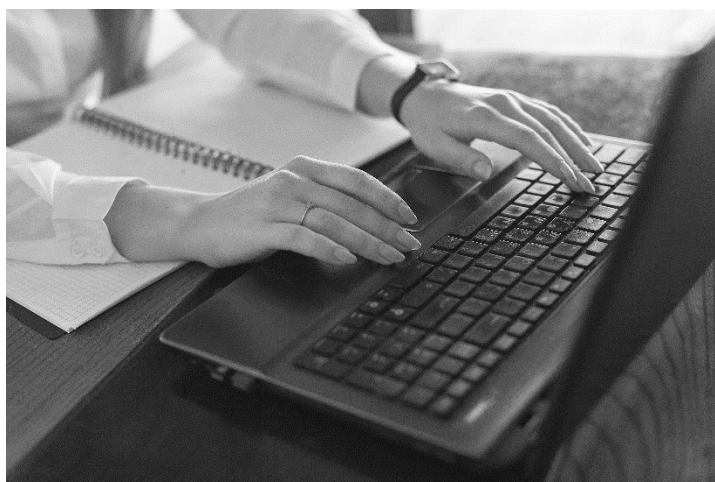
The guidance being offered by governments in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland differs significantly from one jurisdiction to another. This guidance should be used in conjunction with the current guidance being provided by the appropriate national government:

- England: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>
- Scotland: <https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- Wales: <https://gov.wales/coronavirus>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-regulations-guidance-what-restrictions-mean-you>
- Republic of Ireland: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

Whilst every effort has been taken to ensure that this guidance is accurate and current, in this rapidly changing environment, companies should continue to regularly check and follow the specific national government advice which changes regularly and at very short notice.

Other useful sources of guidance:

- HSE COVID-19 (UK) guidance: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/index.htm>
- HSA COVID-19 (IE) guidance: <https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19>
- Build UK COVID-19 guidance: <https://builduk.org/coronavirus/>
- CIF IE COVID-19 guidance: <https://cif.ie/?s=covid-19>



## 1. Key Considerations

COVID-19 is a new illness that can seriously affect the lungs and airways; it is caused by a relatively new Coronavirus, SARS CoV-2.

The virus is mainly transmitted via droplets and aerosols generated when a person coughs, sneezes, speaks and breathes. The virus can settle and survive on some surfaces for up to 72 hours and can be transmitted by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the eyes, nose or mouth. A combination of good personal hygiene and management of social distancing can help to prevent infection.

## 2. Workers showing symptoms at work

The main symptoms of the virus are any one or a combination of: high temperature, persistent cough, shortness of breath, a change to, or loss of, sense of smell or taste.

Planning should be in place to ensure that workers can be returned home in case of falling ill. Anyone displaying symptoms at work should:

- i. inform their manager or supervisor and return home immediately
- ii. avoid touching anything and wear a face covering.

The worker should immediately book a test and follow the appropriate national guidance on self-isolation. If anyone in their household or support bubble displays symptoms, the worker should book a test and self-isolate in accordance with their national government guidance.

Any worker who falls into one of the following categories should not come to work:

- iii. has symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19)
- iv. has received a positive Coronavirus (Covid-19) test result
- v. if a member of their household or support bubble is showing symptoms of Coronavirus (Covid-19) or has received a positive test result
- vi. has been contacted by the test & trace service.

Any worker returning from abroad must follow the national testing and isolation rules, applicable to their country.

## 3. Risk assessment review

Management of health and safety at work legislation requires that a system of risk assessment and method statements (RAMS) should be used to manage health and safety. The regulations require that companies need to regularly review their RAMS system.

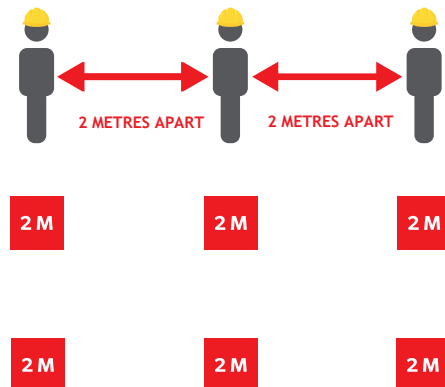
One important trigger for a review is when there is a significant change in operating conditions; the COVID-19 outbreak is one such occasion. Existing risk assessments and method statements need to be reviewed to take account of the risks presented by this outbreak and then shared with, and explained to, all workers.

## 4. Meetings and toolbox talks

Companies are encouraged to operate an open and collaborative approach between workers, supervisors, and managers, where any issues can be openly discussed and addressed.

Companies should remind their workers of the control measures necessary to protect themselves, their colleagues, their families and the wider population by holding or distributing regular briefings and toolbox talks. Only workers that are strictly necessary should attend physical meetings:

- i. participants should be at least 2m apart
- ii. rooms should be well ventilated; doors or windows should be opened to allow fresh air circulation
- iii. meetings should be held in open areas wherever possible.



## 5. Workers at increased risk

Workers who are clinically vulnerable could be at higher risk of severe illness from coronavirus. Additional advice is available from national governments for people who are clinically more vulnerable to coronavirus. The necessary advice can be found in the appropriate national government guidance.

Any worker who lives with a person in an increased risk category should stringently follow their national government guidance.

## 6. Environments presenting increased risk

Certain increased risk environments will require additional considerations:

- i. healthcare and residential care premises
- ii. premises where COVID-19 has been identified
- iii. 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:

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

Additional management, supervision and site precautions should 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.

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 Red Cross or 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.

## 8. Site hygiene

Site hygiene should be enhanced during the outbreak.

### 8.1. Hand washing facilities

Regular breaks should be allowed for hand washing. Facilities should be provided for workers to regularly wash their hands with soap and water. Ensure that 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 should be provided as an alternative.

### 8.2. Toilet facilities

The number of people using toilet facilities at any one time should be restricted. Signage such as floor markings should be used to ensure that at least 2 metres is maintained between people and:

- workers should wash or sanitise hands before and after using the facilities
- cleaning regimes for toilet facilities should be enhanced, 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
- sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels should be provided and arrangements made for regular emptying 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:

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

All areas used for eating should 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

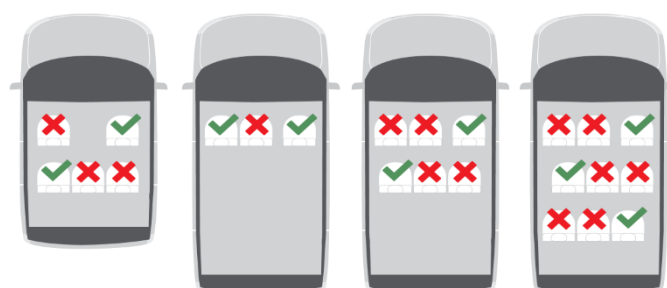
Wherever possible, travel should be made either in workers' own vehicles or single-occupancy work vehicles. If this is not possible due to the nature of the task, the same operatives should be kept together in a fixed group or partnership whilst travelling and on site. The fixed group should comprise the minimum number of operatives while maintaining the maximum possible distance with good ventilation, preferably with windows open and with occupants wearing face coverings.

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

Companies 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 - Example 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



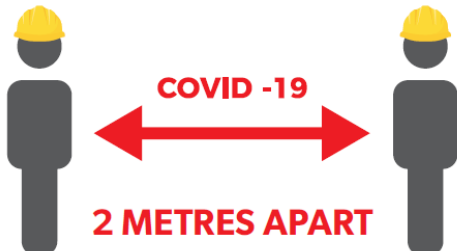
Vehicles should be regularly cleaned using standard cleaning products, in particular the handles and surfaces that occupants may have touched.



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



### 10.1. Work planning to avoid close working

Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, companies 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

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 4 step 'E-R-I-C' hierarchy of control measures system.

1st - eliminate - wherever possible

2nd - reduce exposure - as much as possible

3rd - isolate - all those affected

4th - control the exposure.

All four steps should 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.

### 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:

- i. alternative handling methods
- ii. alternative access equipment
- iii. additional use of mechanical aids.

### 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:

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

### 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:

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

### Step 4 - Control close working

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

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

### 10.3. Step 5 - Provide suitable PPE

Any activity involving working within 2 metres should already have been risk assessed using the 4 step (ERIC) (see over page) 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.

If your risk assessment shows that PPE is required, then employers must provide it free of charge to workers who need it; any PPE provided must fit properly.

There are many circumstances and environments where wearing a face covering is mandatory, see national guidance for current requirements.

Evidence suggests that wearing a face 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 do 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.

Workers 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.

## 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 6) and that 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 occupants what work will be done and why, and that workers must maintain social distancing from them at all times.

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, eg 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 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 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, eg 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.

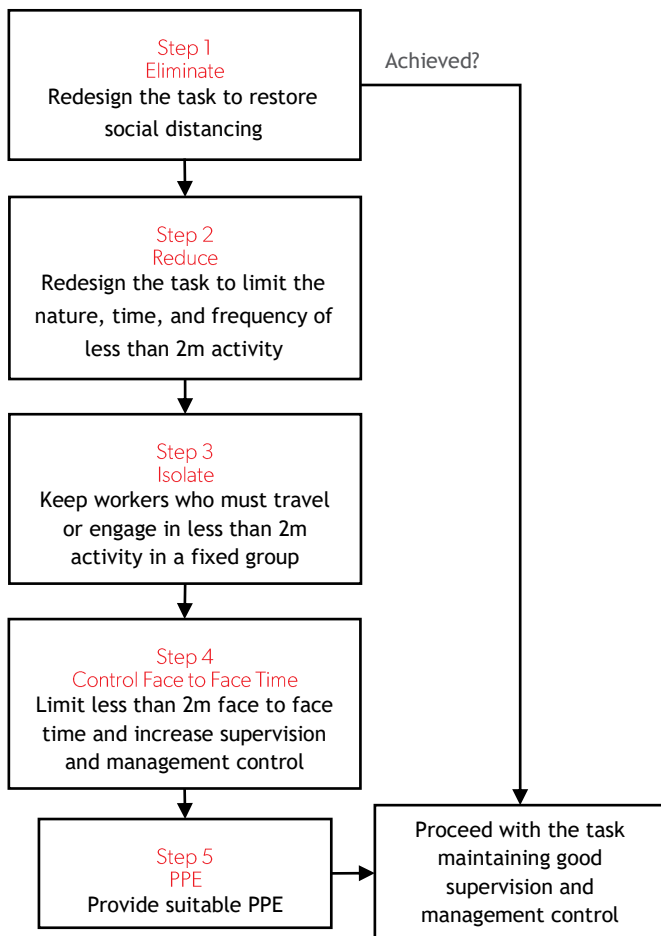
## 12. Task completion

All equipment, tools, and plant used should be wiped down on completion.

Wipes, disposable gloves, and disposable overalls that have been used should be removed and placed into a plastic bag whilst trying not to cross-contaminate onto existing clothes or persons.

Workers should wash their hands and, where appropriate, any reusable PPE (eg eye shields) using soap and water. Where the provision of soap and water is not possible, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that contains at least 60% alcohol is an alternative.

At the end of each day, and following the appropriate local waste regulations, any bagged waste should be disposed of in line with any existing business process and/or national government guidance.



## 13. Example COVID-19 Checklist



Company: ..... Job Ref: .....

Engineers: ..... Date: .....

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 government 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 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, UK companies 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, hand washing 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
(or the Health and Safety Executive at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or 0300 003 1647)

## 14. Disclaimer

DHF does not give any warranty representation or undertaking as to the efficiency usefulness, safety or commercial or technical viability of this guidance:

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