

Social Distancing Guidance for Workers in the Waste and Recycling Sector

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On 7th April 2020, the government produced a document containing guidance for specific sectors on how to implement social distancing. As GMB Reps and members we wanted you to have a better idea of how these documents should be implemented by your employers, so we decided to produce this short guide. You can use it to check that your employer is doing all they should be, to protect you as much as reasonably possible.

Waste management is an important service that should continue but in accordance with the social distancing guidelines wherever possible. The Waste Industry Safety and Health Forum (WISH) have published [further advice relating to COVID-19 and the waste management industry](#).

Where work must carry on and workers are unable to keep a 2 metre distance from each other at all times, in spite of other control measures implemented; then the Employer should complete a risk assessment and look at providing suitable PPE. This should consider whether face masks, gloves, eye protection and coveralls are needed to provide further protection.

What should my employer be doing?

- Workers should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds and more frequently than usual.
- Hands should also be washed each time before getting into and after getting out of enclosed machinery (such as fork lift trucks or crane grabbers). Extra time should be allowed for this and hand sanitiser provided where there is no access to soap and hot water.
- To help with this, your employer should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and hand sanitiser.
- Objects and surfaces that are touched regularly should be frequently cleaned and disinfected, using standard cleaning products, particularly at the end and beginning of shifts.
- When workers are sharing an enclosed space, such as in refuse and waste collection vehicle cabs and are unable to maintain a 2 metre distance, they should wash their hands for 20 seconds or longer before getting into, or after getting out of, the vehicle, or use hand sanitiser where hand washing is not possible.
- Where it is not possible to avoid having more than one person in the vehicle, teams should keep the windows of the vehicle open for ventilation, and be careful to avoid touching their face at all times. Workers should still keep 2 metres apart as much as



possible.

Other things your employer should consider doing

General social distancing measures

- Stopping all non-essential visitors to the workplace
- Introducing staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Monitoring entrances and exits to enable social distancing—they may need to change the number of access points, either increase to reduce congestion or decrease to enable monitoring
- Removing or disabling entry systems that require skin contact e.g. fingerprint scanners or keypad entry systems
- Allow at least two metres between people waiting to enter the building
- Regularly cleaning surfaces in common areas such as reception, office and delivery areas e.g. doors, scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets, desks etc. particularly during peak flow times
- Reducing the number of people in attendance at workplace meetings and consider holding them outdoors wherever possible
- Drivers should remain in their vehicles if the load will allow it and must wash or clean their hands before and after loading or unloading goods and materials.

Hand washing

- Providing additional hand washing facilities to the usual welfare facilities
- Ensuring soap and fresh water is readily available and kept topped up at all times
- Providing hand sanitiser where hand washing facilities are unavailable
- Regularly cleaning the hand washing facilities and checking soap and sanitiser levels
- Providing suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Workplaces will need extra supplies of soap, hand sanitiser and paper towels, and these should be securely stored

Toilet facilities



- Restricting the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time
- Wash hands before and after using the facilities
- Enhance the cleaning regimes for toilet facilities particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush
- Providing suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal.

Canteens and eating arrangements

With cafés and restaurants having been closed across the UK, canteens cannot operate as normal. Whilst there is a requirement for workplaces 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, microwaves etc. must be removed from use. The workers should also be required to stay on site once they have entered it and not use local shops.

- Dedicated eating areas should be identified on site to reduce food waste and contamination
- Break times should be staggered to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- 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
- Where catering is provided on site, it should provide pre-prepared and wrapped food only
 - Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible
 - Communal crockery, eating utensils, cups etc. should not be used
- Drinking water should be provided with enhanced cleaning measures of the tap mechanism introduced
- 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.

Avoiding close working

There will be situations where it is not possible or safe for workers to distance themselves from each other by two metres.

General Principles:

- Non-essential physical work that requires close contact between workers should not be carried out
- Work requiring skin to skin contact should not be carried out
- Plan all other work to minimise contact between workers



- Re-usable PPE must be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers
- Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused
- Stairs should be used in preference to lifts or hoists
- Where lifts or hoists must be used:
 - Lower their capacity to reduce congestion and contact at all times
 - Regularly clean touchpoints, doors, buttons etc.
- Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces, particularly in shared vehicle cabs.

Regularly clean the inside of vehicle cabs and between use by different operators

Site meetings

- Only absolutely necessary meeting participants should attend
- Attendees should be 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.

Cleaning

- Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across the 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
 - Machinery and equipment controls
 - Food preparation and eating surfaces
 - Telephone equipment
 - Key boards, photocopiers and other office equipment
 - Lift and hoist controls
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout the day and at the end of each day.