

# Social Distancing Guidance for Manufacturing

23 Apr 2020

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On 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

As a worker in the manufacturing sector, you play a very important role in ensuring essential goods and food are produced that are desperately needed across the UK. There is no reason for this work to stop if social distancing guidelines are followed wherever possible.

**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?

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- Consider which activities are essential work. If there is essential work where social distancing of 2 metres is not possible, they must take every possible step to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.
- Where a 2 metre distance cannot be maintained, workers should be side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning procedures, pausing production in the day if necessary for cleaning staff to wipe down workstations with disinfectant.
- Assign staff to the same shift teams to limit social interaction.
- Not allow staff to congregate in break times; they should consider arrangements such as staggered break times so that staff can continue to practice social distancing when taking breaks.
- Communicate to all staff that they should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or more at the beginning and end of every break, when they arrive at work and before they leave. To help with this, they should consider adding additional pop-up handwashing stations or facilities, providing soap, water and/or hand sanitiser.
- Ensure that when enter and leaving the building, everyone stays 2 metres apart where possible.
- Remind colleagues daily to only come into work if they are well and no one in their household is self-isolating.

## Other things your employer should consider doing

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### General social distancing measures

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- 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.
- Introducing other measures such as screens/ cutrains, slowing line speeds, reducing

staff on each line etc.

## Hand washing

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- 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

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- 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 facilities

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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

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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

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- 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

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- 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.