

COVID-19 Protective Measures: Manufacturing Sector Industry Guidance and Best Practice

Introduction

During this unprecedented time, manufacturers of all sizes will be challenged with how to safely operate while minimising the risk of COVID-19 transmission amongst employees or their wider community.

To support its members and the wider automotive sector, SMMT has compiled the following document to provide high level guidance on operational issues COVID-19 raises, which manufacturers may wish to consider when developing their own safe working practices.

These issues have been compiled from a wide range of best practice and guidance documents shared with the SMMT. This is by no means an exhaustive list, nor does the guidance apply to all companies and should be used in accordance with the latest government guidance.

In line with government guidance, employers, with consultation of staff or workforce health and safety representatives (as appropriate), must undertake their own COVID-19 risk assessment¹ to identify specific workplace risks and take appropriate steps to mitigate them.

We would also recommend engaging employees in this process to ensure buy-in and understanding, and that any developed protocol be communicated with employees before returning to work.

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1. SMMT Disclaimer

Whilst SMMT endeavours to ensure that the content of information in its industry guidance is accurate and up-to-date at the date of publication, no representation or warranty, express or implied, is made as to its accuracy or completeness and therefore the information in the industry guidance should not be relied upon.

It is each company's responsibility to comply with the current COVID-19 legislation and related government guidance. Therefore, SMMT information and guidance are not legally binding. Readers should always seek appropriate advice from a suitably qualified expert before taking, or refraining from taking, any action. SMMT disclaims liability for any loss, howsoever caused, arising directly or indirectly from reliance on the information in its industry guidance relating to COVID-19 as published on its website.

2. Scope of Guidance – People

2.1. Training, education and communication

Key principle

Employers should consider what training, education and communication will be required to ensure employees, visitors and contractors know and understand the requirements to keep themselves and their fellow employees safe.

Employer guidance

Employers should:

- 2.1.1. Share “Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020”² with employees, contractors and visitors.
- 2.1.2. Print off and display “Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020”² to illustrate to employees, contractors and visitors that you have followed the government’s guidance.

Employers should consider:

- 2.1.3. Developing and implementing an education, training and communication programme to convey any new protocols, policies or standards that are developed, which could include:
 - The principles of how COVID-19 is spread.
 - The employers new set of standards or protocols.
 - The importance of following employer standards or protocols.
 - Practical guidance and walkthroughs on how to safely operate on-site.
- 2.1.4. Communicating with and training employees prior to commencing operations.
- 2.1.5. Daily briefings and reminders on the new standards and requirements.
- 2.1.6. Displaying visual posters, leaflets, information on white boards, presentations or online platforms to ensure employees are reminded of company standards and/or government guidelines.
- 2.1.7. A consistent approach across the whole site to any visual cues or guidance including floor markings for social distancing in line with government guidelines (see section 2 Scope of Guidance – People, Social distancing standards), ‘stop and think’ boxes, and/or any direction of travel cues.

2.2. Health assessment

Key principle

Employers should look to minimise the risk of spreading COVID-19 by implementing a policy of employee assessment before coming to work.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 2.2.1. How best to implement an employee health assessment process, which could include:
 - Daily self-assessment to be completed by employees before coming to work.
 - An employer led and managed check in log.
 - Daily health checks on arrival against known COVID-19 symptoms.
- 2.2.2. Assessment should be against known COVID-19 symptoms:
 - High temperature (over 37.8 Degrees C or chest/back hot to touch).
 - New and continuous cough.
 - Difficulty breathing.
- 2.2.3. Providing clear guidance to employees in case they fall ill whilst at work. This could include:
 - Informing your Line Manager (as soon as the symptoms arise).
 - Returning home immediately.
 - Avoid touching anything.
 - If you have a cough/sneeze, use a tissue and dispose of it immediately in the appropriate areas.
 - Ensuring the implemented social distancing and hygiene measures are adhered to.
 - Follow the self-isolation government guidelines.

If employees have any known COVID-19 symptoms, they should:

- Stay at home and not come to work.
- Inform their Line Manager.
- Follow government guidelines of self-isolation.
- Use NHS 111 telephone number / online services for further guidance.

In line with government guidance³ employees should not come to work if any person in their home is self-isolating.

2.3. Clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable

Key principle

Employers should follow the government guidelines on clinically extremely vulnerable and consider how best to support clinically vulnerable employees.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider how to protect and support:

- 2.3.1. Clinically extremely vulnerable employees⁴:

- In line with government guidelines employees considered clinically extremely vulnerable are strongly advised to remain at home. Any clinically extremely vulnerable employees should have received a letter from their GP outlining this.

2.4. Clinically vulnerable⁵:

- Work from home where possible.
- Where work from home is not possible consider how the social distancing can be maintained and if not how risks can be mitigated to safeguard these employees.

2.5. Social distancing standards

Key principle

Employers should consider developing and implementing policies to ensure onsite 2m social distancing in line with government guidelines⁶.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 2.5.1. Providing alternative ways to assist safe employee interactions, including:
 - Discouraging physical greetings, such as handshakes.
 - Limiting physical meetings, instead suggesting phone calls, digital platforms or other tools, such as whiteboards for communication instead.
 - Avoiding groups or crowds where possible or observe social distancing where this is not possible.

2.6. Hygiene standards

Key principle

Employers should provide employees with the necessary guidance on how to maintain safe hygiene standards during this period. These should be developed, communicated and reminded across all operations.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 2.6.1. Developing guidance for employees in line with government guidelines⁷ on hygiene, including:
 - Clear instructions on hand washing methods (wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water).
 - Where to find and how to use hand sanitiser.
 - Where to find and how to use cleaning products across operations.
 - The importance of using disposable materials such as paper towels.
 - Encouraging their employees to wash their clothes regularly.

2.7. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Key principle

Government guidance states PPE beyond what you usually use is not beneficial in managing the risk of COVID-19 and the primary measures should be social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams. However, employers will need to undertake a risk assessment to determine the level of PPE required for their operations

Employers should also consider that providing PPE, particularly masks, may reduce the risk of transmission, particularly from asymptomatic carriers and may allay some employees' fears about returning to work.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 2.7.1. Providing PPE as required based on the risk assessment once social distancing, hygiene and fixed team measures are in place for roles onsite where there is a high risk of transmission, which could include:
 - Providing masks, gloves, safety glasses and/or visors.
 - Clear instructions of how PPE should be used and disposed of in a safe manner (please see link in section).

2.8. Mental health

Key principle

Employers should take into consideration employee mental health as a result of COVID-19, in particular the effects that may arise due to isolation.

Employer guidance

Employers could consider:

- 2.8.1. Promoting mental health and wellbeing awareness to employees during COVID-19.
- 2.8.2. Regularly communicating mental health information and consider an open door policy for those who may require additional support.
- 2.8.3. Following the steps and guidelines in line with government guidance⁸.

2.9. Employee travel

Key principle

Employers should consider the methods of transportation each employee may use to arrive and depart from work and provide advice and guidance on how they should best do this with minimal risk to themselves and others.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 2.9.1. Prohibiting non-essential business travel.
- 2.9.2. Developing employee guidelines to minimise risk for all modes of transport in line with government guidance which could include:

- Hand washing before and after journeys.
- Encouraging employees to travel alone in their own vehicle.
- Where possible encouraging one space between cars in parking areas.
- Ensuring as much space between people where lift shares are essential.
- Observing social distancing and paying in advance to minimise use of cash if use of public transport is essential.
- Avoiding public transport, where possible, and walk or cycle instead.

2.10. Operational adjustments

Key principle

With this new set of challenges, employers may need to adjust operations to accommodate for new safe working practices. Where possible, operations should be adjusted to minimise the risk to employees.

Employer guidance

Employees should consider:

- 2.10.1. Staggering start times and breaks to minimise the number of people arriving on site or at any potential bottle neck areas (e.g. clock-in machines, canteens and restrooms).
- 2.10.2. Managing shift changes and staggering lunch breaks to allow time to disinfect and clean common areas.
- 2.10.3. Staggering shifts to limit the number of people onsite at any given time.
- 2.10.4. Rearranging any tables and chairs to observe social distancing, avoiding face to face seating in canteens or break rooms.
- 2.10.5. Introducing one-way entrance and exits into any communal areas, seating and potential queue areas with clear signage and floor markings to maintain social distancing.
- 2.10.6. Minimising the number of non-production and/or office employees on-site as much as possible.
- 2.10.7. Introducing 'fixed teams or partnering' to limit the number of people each employee comes into contact with.
- 2.10.8. Where social distancing cannot be followed, employees should work side by side or back to back.
- 2.10.9. Adjusting production processes, cell locations or shifts to minimise the number of employees working at the same or nearby stations, or in close proximity to one another.
- 2.10.10. Analysing and reconfiguring internal goods, people and traffic flows to minimise the number of potential employee interactions or encounters (e.g. drop off points for items to be shared).
- 2.10.11. Reducing the maximum occupancy for lifts.

2.11. In and outbound logistics

Key principle

It is recommended that employers liaise with customers, suppliers and service/logistics providers to establish and agree safe working practices that minimise the risk of transmission.

Employer guidance

Prior to entry, employers should consider:

- 2.11.1. Making any site visitors aware of site rules before arriving or entering the site.
- 2.11.2. Requiring a visitor health declaration or self-assessment process before being allowed on site.
- 2.11.3. Refusing entry if supplier/contractor presents symptoms and/or has been exposed to a high risk situation or location.

Upon entry, employers could consider:

- 2.11.4. Encouraging delivery drivers to remain in their vehicles if the load will allow.
- 2.11.5. Provide hand sanitiser and if necessary PPE if drivers are required to disembark.

3. Scope of Guidance - Place

3.1. Arrival and entrances

Key principle

Employers should assess and adjust the employee arrival process and any entrances and exits to minimise the risk of social distancing not being observed.

3.1.1. *Car parking*

Where possible employers could consider:

- Allowing one space between cars in parking area.
- One-way system introduced in and out of the car park with social distancing demarcation across the whole of the car park.

3.1.2 *Entry and Exit to building*

Employers could consider:

- 3.1.2.1 Increasing the number of entry and exit points if possible.
- 3.1.2.2 Setting up one-way entry and exits.
- 3.1.2.3 Implementing appropriate social distance guidance or floor markings in case of queues.
- 3.1.2.4 Providing hand sanitiser at both sides of entrance and exits.

3.1.3 *Clock in and out*

Employers could consider:

- 3.1.3.1 Implementing contactless clocking in and out systems.
- 3.1.3.2 Implementing a one-way system for clocking in or out via one-way entrance and exits.

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- 3.1.3.3 Implement appropriate social distance guidance or floor markings around clock in / out machines.

3.2 Working areas

3.2.2 *Workstations*

Key principle

Employers should assess working areas, adjust layouts and provide necessary materials to ensure safe working practices can be observed. This should include all site areas but in particular those where employees will be in close proximity or are frequently used.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 3.2.1.1 Providing shop floor markings to indicate social distancing requirements.
- 3.2.1.2 Providing screens (flexible or stationary) if social distancing cannot be observed.
- 3.2.1.3 Reducing the rotation of equipment.

3.2.2 *Shared offices & meeting rooms*

Key principle

Where office staff are able to work from home this should be considered and continued in line with government guidance. Where working from home is not possible, shared offices and meeting rooms should be set up to observe social distancing and necessary cleaning materials.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 3.2.2.1 Reorganising office spaces, in particular desk orientation to maintain safe distance and avoid face to face seating.
- 3.2.2.2 Setting up one-way traffic systems and separate entrances and exits to minimise the risk of people walking past each other in close proximity.
- 3.2.2.3 Keeping doors open where possible to minimise the number of surfaces touched.
- 3.2.2.4 Implementing a daily or more frequent cleaning and disinfecting programme across all shared office areas, with a focus on commonly used and communal areas.
- 3.2.2.5 Keep places well ventilated with open windows and doors. Use external extractor fans and make sure ventilation systems are set to maximize the air flow.

3.2.3 *Communal areas*

Key principle

Employers should look to minimise the number of employees using communal areas such as restrooms, canteens, break areas, locker rooms, changing facilities at the same time. When being used, clear instructions and signage should be provided to ensure social distancing can be observed. And necessary cleaning materials should also be provided so employees can safely use these areas.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

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- 3.2.3.1 Rearranging any tables and chairs to observe social distancing, avoiding face to face and seating in canteens or break rooms.
 - 3.2.3.2 Introducing one-way entrance and exits into any communal areas, seating and potential queue areas with clear signage and floor markings to maintain social distancing.
 - 3.2.3.3 Staggering breaks and lunch schedules to minimise potential bottlenecks and to allow areas to be cleared and/or cleaned before the next group arrives.
 - 3.2.3.4 Keeping doors open where possible to eliminate touch contact.
 - 3.2.3.5 Increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of these shared facilities, in particular objects and surface that are touched regularly e.g. door handles, hand rails, toilets, vending machines, turnstiles etc.
 - 3.2.3.6 Establishing visual cues at restrooms and/or restrictions for safe use of facilities.
 - 3.2.3.7 Where possible, provide paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities.
 - 3.2.3.8 Reorganising locker rooms throughout the site to allow for social distancing.
 - 3.2.3.9 Any other communal areas such as smoking areas and prayer rooms.
 - 3.2.3.10 Where possible, providing packaged meals or similar to avoid opening staff canteens.

3.3 Cleaning and hygiene

Key principle

Companies should implement a thorough and frequent cleaning programme across the site as a preventative measure to reduce the risk of transmission. Particular focus should be in high traffic areas, often touched surfaces and communal areas.

Employer guidance

Employers should consider:

- 3.1.2. Establishing clear cleaning and disinfecting practices and timelines for all key working areas including offices, meeting rooms, communal areas, restrooms and production areas.
- 3.1.3. Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly e.g. door handles, hand rails, toilets, vending machines, turnstiles and elevators.
- 3.1.4. Providing materials across the site as needed including alcohol based wipes.
- 3.1.5. Following the government guidelines⁸ on how to disinfect all areas should there be a COVID-19 suspected case.

4. Contacts for Further Information

- Public Health England (PHE)
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>
- Health & Safety Executive (HSE)
 - https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm?utm_source=hse.gov.uk&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_content=home-page-banner
- SMMT

- <https://www.smmt.co.uk/industry-topics/covid-19-automotive-business-support/>

Links to Government Guidance on COVID-19 and Workplaces:

- COVID-19 guidance:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>
- COVID-19 guidance for employees, employers and businesses:
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
 - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb965d5d3bf7f5d3c74a2dd/working-safely-during-covid-19-factories-plants-warehouses-110520.pdf>
- Manufacturing Sector Industry Guidance and Best Practice references:
 1. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm>
 2. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb963fcd3bf7f5d39550303/staying-covid-19-secure.pdf>
 3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>
 4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>
 5. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>
 6. Section 3 - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb965d5d3bf7f5d3c74a2dd/working-safely-during-covid-19-factories-plants-warehouses-110520.pdf>
 7. Section 5 - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5eb965d5d3bf7f5d3c74a2dd/working-safely-during-covid-19-factories-plants-warehouses-110520.pdf>
 8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings>
- Health and safety is a devolved matter. See the guidance on social distancing and business in other nations of the UK:
 - [Northern Ireland](#)
 - [Scotland](#)
 - [Wales](#)