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KNOWLEDGE HUB

FIS Four Step Protocol to Safe Systems of Work and the COVID-19 Pandemic 2020

As the construction industry comes to terms with the impact of COVID-19 for the past month, construction sites are beginning to re-open across the UK, with more expected to follow in the next few weeks. Whether you are the main contractor controlling the site or one of the many sub-contractor's beings asked to come back to site. This Four Step Safe Systems of Work protocol has been developed to ensure that there is a COVID-19 risk assessment in place for the management of health and safety upon each project that prioritises safety, reducing the risk to workers and liability for individual companies.

Step 1: Start Safe

Before a worker enters a site, they must be fully briefed on the hazards associated with the virus, the symptoms and how they can travel to work safely and minimise the risk to infection of themselves and their colleagues. It is recommended that this is managed through daily reminders and regular briefings. All workers should complete a re-induction to the site emphasising the COVID-19 protocols before coming on site.

Useful resources:
[FIS Guidance to issue to self-employed workers on reporting to work, risk mitigation and self-isolation](#)
[Site-Operating-Procedures (England), Construction Leadership Council](#)
[Site Operating Procedures (Ireland), from the Construction Industry Federation](#)

Step 2: Site Safe

Guidance from the Construction Leadership Council is that all construction sites should assess their situation and those sites that cannot implement the Site Operating Procedures Safely **should not remain open**.

Even if you are not responsible for the overall site, FIS is recommending that members reassure themselves of the situation before committing to return by conducting their own inspection. FIS has developed a suggested Site-Inspection checklist to support this. Consideration should also be given to whether physical distancing measures introduce new health and safety risks (e.g. because they impact communication). Engage with workers and other teams/trades working on site to develop appropriate controls to mitigate the risk.

Once you have confirmed that the site is able to operate safely, then it is advisable that you confirm this daily and ensure workers are aware of the checklist and know to contact the appropriate nominated supervisor immediately if they are not satisfied with the conditions they are working in. If these concerns are not immediately addressed to your satisfaction and fundamentally the site is not safe you can report to the HSE whistleblowing service, which will take it out of your hands. You are not advised to continue working.

Useful resources:
[FIS Site Checklist (see Page 18)](#)
[Construction Leadership Council Site-Operating-Procedures (England).](#)
[Irish Construction Industry Federation Site Operating Procedure (Ireland).](#)
[FIS COVID-19 – Risk Assessment For Employees and Workers Arriving on Site](#)
[FIS COVID19 Employee Welfare Policy](#)

FIS
Olton Bridge, 245 Warwick Road
Solihull, West Midlands B92 7AH

+44(0)121 707 0077
info@thefis.org
www.thefis.org

Technical note – Professional Indemnity Insurance
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Step 3: Task Safe

The CLC Site Operating Procedures recognise that, if you are not able to work whilst maintaining a two metre distance, you should consider whether the activity should continue and, if so, risk assess it using the hierarchy of controls and against any sector-specific guidance.

Before returning to site it is recommended that you review all potential situations where workers will be required to work closer than 2m and confirm with your client that the programme has been reviewed and this work is deemed essential at this stage in the project and so should proceed. As part of this discussion appropriate method statements should be available to show that you have considered all options in accordance with the hierarchy of control before resorting to PPE. Implications on cost and time at this stage should be reviewed.

To support this, FIS has produced a Task Assessment Tool, that focusses on common operations in our sector. This remains a living document and FIS has a H&S Task Group that will review issues raised through the membership to ensure companies are working to the best guidance available.

Where working is required at less than 2m, individuals should always seek to minimise face to face working through behaviour and use of appropriate PPE. Workers who are undertaking work under these circumstances should be fully briefed on the limitations defined within the site operating procedures and in carefully controlled teams. Behaviour is critical and to minimise risk and support supervision it is advisable to keep teams consistently together to minimise and control exposure and ensure that this is effectively supervised on site (e.g. through coloured arm bands).

FIS H&S Task Assessment Tool
PPE Certificate Checklist

Site 4: Home Safe

All contractors should sign out before they leave the site, ensure that any single use PPE is suitably disposed of and acknowledge obligation to inform the appointed person if they become unwell or become aware they have had contact with a suspected COVID-19 case. They should be encouraged to wash hands with soap or use hand sanitiser as they leave. As well as travelling home safely it is advisable to offer workers guidance on travelling home, disposing of PPE, and ensuring that they minimise risk of infection elsewhere.

Guidance on managing applying PPE

Further resources to support members in managing issues associated with COVID-19 are available through the FIS COVID-19 Hub

While every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the details presented in this document, we regret that FIS cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions contained herein.