Covid-19 site procedures and guidance

Diggers' Forum continue to support Prospect's updated Site Health & Safety guidance.

Adaptations to site work during Coronavirus

This document collates adaptations that we have heard about from DF members to make their work on-site safe and to minimize the risk to them and their colleagues from coronavirus. It also identifies scenarios where there may be issues.

The Basics

- All sites should have site specific risk assessments made to address the issues caused by coronavirus and all staff must read and understand these.
- All staff will observe good personal hygiene standards, washing hands regularly for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap, or using hand sanitizer.
- Staff must not travel to work if they have experienced symptoms of coronavirus (https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/). Should staff develop symptoms while on site, they should immediately report the matter to their supervisor whilst maintaining social distancing (2m minimum distance). Companies should have procedures in place to ensure staff with symptoms are removed from site in a way that minimizes the risk to other staff.
- Field staff who are exhibiting symptoms can now get an antigen test to see if they have Covid-19. Go to https://www.gov.uk/apply-coronavirus-test
- Stop and think before each task, can it be done safely and maintaining social distancing? For you, and for others.
- Communicate with each other. If you need to pass close by another person, make them aware of what you intend and wait until they can move to a safe distance
- Put together a personal grab bag for site- alcohol gel, hand wash, emergency gloves, face mask, pen etc. Your employer may pay/provide this on top of general measures.
- If you are wearing disposable gloves for a specific task, be aware that these can spread the virus if kept on for multiple tasks so remove/replace between each task they are needed for.
- Avoid touching your face
- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work for additional guidance

The commute

- The most effective way to commute safely is by instituting a 1 person, 1 vehicle policy. Companies may consider staff that reside in the same household are at no additional risk from sharing vehicles. Staff should be in agreement and record in the dynamic risk assessment.
- In a small number of works vehicles it is possible to maintain the 2m separation recommended by PHE and so two members of staff can travel together in these vehicles.
- Where staff are required to commute in multiple occupancy vehicles e.g. minibuses, there should be other measures in place to protect them e.g. keeping the same people travelling together, minimizing the number of people in each vehicle and maintaining as large a separation as possible.
- Surfaces, steering wheels and door handles on vehicles should be dis-infected after they have been used. Vehicles should be assigned to a driver and not swapped unless absolutely necessary.
- Public transport should be avoided. If staff are using their own vehicles, they should be being paid mileage at a rate agreed with the employer. Business insurance for the vehicle may additionally be required.
- Updated government advice on works vehicles https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles

Starting the day

- When parking up, have a system to stagger getting in/out of vehicles.
- Getting on to site may take longer, particularly if the entrance to site is small. Be patient; everyone understands things are going to take longer at this time.
- Getting changed for work should maintain social distancing, as should collecting tools etc. Consider keeping your PPE/tools in your site vehicle to avoid all staff having to go to the store to get them.
- Keep your own pen for signing briefing documents etc. Maybe take a group photo (with social distancing) of those who have attended a briefing rather than getting everyone to sign off on the same paper if it isn't a legal requirement (e.g. RAs)
- Talk through processes with the people who are going to be doing them, including sub-contractors.

Away jobs

- Accommodation should be part of the risk assessment.
- Look into doing click and collect for shopping when in self-catered accommodation to reduce time in shops, doing a weekly shop where possible
- Consider wearing a face mask in less controllable environments, such as supermarkets.
- Think about others- you're responsible for cleaning up and wiping down surfaces/touch points after yourself.
- Single occupancy accommodation is the best solution to reducing the risk outside of work on away jobs, unless staff already live together.

Working

- Keeping distanced while digging on open rural sites or on sites with not many people seems to have been working well provided everyone communicates well.
- Keep strategically placed bags/boxes of disposable gloves around and ensure bins don't overflow/get too full.
- Keep a supply of consumables that you may need- a supply of permatrace, string grid pegs, cem caps and so on to avoid needing to get kit off others. Have a set of tools that only you use- don't share tools or kit. Maybe consider labelling them. Some people use different colours of electrical tape to show their kit- easy to see from a distance rather than putting name tags on.
- Any shared equipment, including survey and photography equipment, should either be wiped with alcohol wipes after each use with particular attention to keypads, touch screens, buttons and handles. More sustainably, one person should be given responsibility for these tasks.
- However approached, one person should be assigned to looking after/charging the kit and maintaining the photo register/survey archive.
- Any equipment that may be damaged by the use of alcohol wipes e.g. touchscreens or where it is unsustainable such as cables should be labeled so that appropriate hygiene methods can be undertaken during use, e.g. refrain from touching other equipment, face and gloves, and/or after use e.g. hand washing.
- If paper recording, ensure that everyone has a supply of common recording sheets with them, rather than keeping a central stock that everyone goes to.
- If tablet recording, either all staff should have their own tablet and be responsible for it. Alternatively recording is done by those who have tablets for those without tablets.
- When doing machining, get walkie-talkies to communicate with driver rather than approaching cab
- Fencing on site- putting up Heras maintains social distancing by dint of the size of the panels, Netlon can be completed by putting out the road irons first and then one person stretching out the Netlon and another hitting in the pins, keeping 2m apart.

Welfare and breaks

- Sites may require additional welfare to ensure space for staff while socially distancing. This should take site stand downs for bad weather into consideration so that staff can wait out the weather in safety.
- This may mean getting more welfare to site, or providing mobile welfare units/welfare vans. If this is not possible, consider reducing the size of the site team.
- Stagger breaks with frequent cleaning of handles and touchpoints.
- Additional handle/touch point cleaning for toilets should be organized.
- Site POs and supervisors should keep an eye on water and fuel levels to ensure these do not run out. All staff should make it their responsibility to let the site supervisor know when a toilet is getting full or when water/fuel is getting low. Running out of these will affect the safety of all people on site, so it is even more important that they are kept topped up.

- Staff should consider either bringing food that does not require heating/cooking to avoid congestion around microwaves. Do your washing up at home. Get a flask for hot drinks for the day.
- Signs on cabin doors saying how many people are allowed in.
- 1-way systems clearly marked out where necessary.

Packing up
- Think about the consumables you've used today. Do you still have enough for tomorrow?
- Similarly to starting the day, you should maintain social distancing when returning tools and getting changed. As before, if you can keep these pieces of equipment in your vehicle safely then do.
- Clean down any equipment with alcohol wipes that may be picked up by someone else within 72 hours
- Head home and stay safe!

Back to the office?
- Where possible sites have been upgrading their on-site equipment to include wifi, scanners, printers and remote server access to minimise office trips and upload files straight to company servers.
- Finds, samples and any material returned to the office should either be sanitized after dropping them off or left with information on what date they were deposited and not touched by office staff for 72 hours. To keep journeys to a minimum, a designated person should do any office runs during the week, with as few trips as needed. Good communication is vital for this.
- At the end of each week staff should check their supplies of consumables and equipment to see if they need to collect any more from office/stores.

Mental Health
- Ask how your colleagues are feeling in the morning. Normalise conversations about mental health so that those who feel anxious can confidently speak up.
- If you are not feeling stressed or anxious don't criticise those that are. Use your strength to support those who are worried.
- We're all in the same storm but some of us aren't in boats.
- If you are worried or stressed about anything and don't want to talk to your immediate colleagues, talk to your company's mental health first aiders (if available), union reps, an Employee Assistance Programme if your company has one or charities like Mind. https://www.mind.org.uk/