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The Return to Work Safely Protocol: COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers which was first issued on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, has been updated on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2020.

The reason for the update is to bring the document in line with the Government’s Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID19 as well as updating the public health advice available since its first publication.

The revised document is called the “work Safely Protocol” designed to support employers and workers to put infection prevention and control (IPC) and other measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. In addition, covers the measures needed to both ensure the safe operation of workplaces and the reopening of, workplaces following temporary closure due to local and regional restrictions.

As advice issued by Government and NPHEt continues to evolve, the Work Safely Protocol and the measures employers and workers need to address will also evolve. The details included in the Work Safely Protocol are therefore non-exhaustive and are subject to change.

As with the original protocol, the Work Safely Protocol applies to all sectors, and business and sectors must review and update their policies and procedures in line with the Work Safely Protocol.

We have Identified below are the key enhancements and additions associated with the Work Safety Protocol in order to assist organisation to update their arrangements in line with the Work Safely Protocol. Please note that in the interest of brevity, the details below are a summation of the key changes and are therefore non-exhaustive so additional guidance may be required for specific sections as required by the nature of activities being undertaken.

### **Key enhancements and additions;**

#### Section B. Working together to suppress COVID-19 in the workplace

- Enhancement – the provision of information and guidance to workers on;
  - The use of face coverings/masks, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
  - The steps to be taken in the event of a suspected or positive case or outbreak in the workplace and the role of public health authorities in managing an outbreak
  - To provide COVID-19 induction (re-induction) training for all workers, after the re-opening of the workplace following a closure
- Enhancement – Ensuring that at least one Lead Worker Representative is in place in the workplace.
- Enhancement - Employers can also use a competent person responsible for managing health and safety (internally or externally) as required to ensure the effective implementation of changes to work activities and the implementation of IPC measures at the place of work.

#### Section C. Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

- Addition – Section added to outline the LWR role

#### Section 2. General Information on COVID-19

- A. Introduction:
  - Addition – Reference to the Government’s Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with Covid-19

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- B. Symptoms of COVID-19:
  - Addition – loss or change in your sense of smell or taste – this means you’ve noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal.
  - Enhancement - If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone your family doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home).
- C. How COVID-19 Spreads
  - Addition – Airborne transmission is the spread of a virus in very tiny respiratory particles. This can happen over a longer distance and persist for a longer time than droplets, such as within a room. Airborne transmission does not appear to play a major role in the spread of COVID19. However, it can happen in some situations. To minimise this risk, keep indoor spaces well ventilated (aired out) by opening windows and doors if possible.
  - Addition - COVID-19 (coronavirus) can survive:
    - up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel
    - less than 4 hours on copper
    - less than 24 hours on cardboard
  - Enhancement - Common household disinfectants will kill the virus on surfaces. Clean the surface first and then use a disinfectant. A system of thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces in the workplace is essential. For example, vending machines, coffee machines and door handles should all be cleaned frequently, as they can be particular sources of transmission. If disinfection is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning. Please refer to section on Cleaning below for further details.
  - Addition - Current information suggests that infected people can transmit the virus both when they are symptomatic (showing symptoms) and asymptomatic (showing no symptoms). This is why it is essential that anyone who is showing symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, or anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed case, should be tested.
  - Addition - Research has also now identified specific types of working environments where the spread of COVID-19 is more likely to occur, often due to environmental factors. For example, there have been reported outbreaks of COVID-19 in some closed space settings, such as meat processing plants, nightclubs, places of worship, restaurants, and workplaces where people may be shouting or talking loudly. In these outbreaks, airborne transmission (specifically in indoor locations that are densely populated and inadequately ventilated) cannot be ruled out. In these high-risk environments, a greater level of adherence by employers and workers to the specific public health advice for such settings is required.

### Section 3. Steps for Employers and Workers to Reduce Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in the Workplace.

- A. Keep their COVID-19 Response Plan up to date
  - Enhancement – Employers will continue to:
    - develop and/or update their COVID-19 Response Plan.
    - develop plans in consultation with workers and communicate once finalised.
    - facilitate the appointment of at least one lead worker representative for the workplace, which shall be done in consultation with the workers and/or representatives.

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- review and update their occupational health and safety (OSH) risk assessments and safety statement.
  - address the level(s) of risk associated with various workplaces and work activities in their COVID-19 business plans and OSH risk assessments. For example, where, how and from what sources might workers be exposed to COVID-19? Consider also exposure to/from the public, customers, co-workers etc. In this regard, particular locations (canteens, washroom facilities, access/egress points), where staff congregate can be particular hotspots for transmission.
  - ensure that where work practices have been changed or modified to prevent the spread of COVID-19, workers are not inadvertently exposed to additional occupational health and safety hazards and risks.
  - take into account workers' individual risk factors (e.g. older workers, whether a worker is considered very high risk or high risk due to the presence of underlying medical conditions)
  - include measures to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
  - include the controls necessary to address the risks identified.
  - include contingency measures to address increased rates of worker absenteeism, implementation of the measures necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, changing work patterns, etc.
  - include in the plan any specific communication measures that are required for workers whose first language may not be English. In such workplaces, employers should identify leads who can act as communicators to particular groups. Such leads may also be nominated as the lead worker representative. The HSE have provided translations of their COVID-19 Resources.
  - include in the plan any specific measures or response for dealing with an outbreak of COVID-19
- B. Implement and maintain policies and procedures for prompt identification and isolation of workers who may have symptoms of COVID-19
  - Addition - The prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a crucial step in protecting the worker involved, their colleagues, customers or others at the workplace. It is also a crucial step in preventing an outbreak in a workplace from moving into the wider community.
  - Enhancement – Employers will;
    - keep a log of contacts to facilitate contact tracing.
    - inform workers and others of the purpose of the log (i.e. to be used by Public Health in the event of an outbreak).
    - maintain up-to-date information on all workers (full-time, part-time, contract and agency) in the workplace. Such information should include at a minimum the name, address and contact phone number of the individual worker. This information will be needed by the Department of Public Health in the event there is a case or outbreak.
    - display information on signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and not working if displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if feeling unwell.
    - provide information on how to receive illness benefits or other Government COVID-19 supports.
    - provide up to date information on public health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie.

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- provide public health advice and information in languages other than English as required. Consideration should also be given to providing a variety of information on TV monitors in prominent locations (canteens, access/egress points) to enhance uptake of key messages.
    - provide instruction for workers to follow if they develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19 during work.
    - cooperate with the local Department of Public Health if a case of COVID-19 and/or an outbreak is confirmed in their workplace and implement any follow up actions required.
    - maintain personal information collected in line with GDPR requirements
  - Enhancement – Workers will;
    - make themselves aware of the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor their own wellbeing.
    - not go to work if they are displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if feeling unwell.
    - immediately self-isolate or restrict their movements at home if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 and contact their family doctor to arrange a test.
    - stay at home, if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19, and not go to work. In such instances, they must also restrict their movements for 14 days.
    - report to managers immediately if any symptoms develop during work.
    - cooperate with any public health personnel and their employer for contact tracing purposes and follow any public health advice given in the event of a case or outbreak in their workplace
- C. Develop, Update, Consult, Communicate and Implement Workplace Changes or Policies
  - Enhancement – Employers will Continue to;
    - review and revise existing sick leave policies and amend as appropriate and in line with normal procedures. In so doing, employers will consult with and communicate to workers, in line with normal procedures, any changes that are introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
    - make available the necessary public health advice from the HSE and other sources as appropriate to their workers. The LWR(s) appointed should be involved in communicating the health advice around COVID-19 in the workplace.
    - provide information on how to receive illness benefits or other Government COVID-19 supports.
    - agree through negotiation with workers/Trades Unions any temporary restructuring of work patterns that may be required to implement the COVID-19 prevention measures in the workplace. In so doing, any existing sectoral agreements must be taken into account.
    - ensure that conditions, including the employment of staff via agency contracts, support the prevention and spread of COVID-19.
    - minimise rotation of staff across multiple settings and workplaces, particularly in relation to staff employed under agency contracts.
  - Addition - Employers should provide advice on the tracker and encourage workers download. Workers should download as it can be used for contact tracing purposes in and out of the workplace.
- D. Implement the COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures
  - D1. Hand Hygiene

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- Enhancements – Employers must;
  - ensure that appropriate hygiene facilities and materials are in place to accommodate workers adhering to hand hygiene measures.
  - make available advice and training on how to perform hand hygiene effectively.
  - display posters on how to wash hands in appropriate locations throughout the workplace.
  - provide hand sanitisers (alcohol or non-alcohol based) where washing facilities cannot be accessed. In choosing an alcohol-based sanitiser, a minimum of 60% alcohol is required.  
Note: alcohol-based hand sanitisers are highly flammable and must not be stored or used near heat or a naked flame.
- Enhancement – Workers must:
  - be familiar with and follow hand hygiene guidance and advice.
  - wash their hands with soap and water or with hand sanitiser (alcohol (minimum of 60%) and or non-alcohol based) for at least 20 seconds and in particular:
    - after coughing and sneezing,
    - before and after eating,
    - before and after preparing food,
    - before and after removing their face covering,
    - if in contact with someone who is displaying any COVID-19 symptoms,
    - before and after being on public transport,
    - before and after being in a crowd,
    - when arriving and leaving the workplace/other sites,
    - when entering and exiting vehicles,
    - before having a cigarette or vaping,
    - when hands are dirty. If visibly dirty, wash hands with soap and water, and
    - after toilet use.
  - avoid touching their eyes, mouth, or nose.
  - have access to facilities to support hand hygiene (for example hand sanitiser/hand wipes/hand washing facilities).
  - not share objects that touch their mouth, for example, bottles or cups.
  - use own pens for signing in/out.

## D2. Respiratory Hygiene

- Enhancement – Employers must:
  - provide tissues as well as bins/bags for their disposal.
  - empty bins at regular intervals.
  - provide advice on good respiratory practice including the safe use, storage and disposal of face masks/coverings and the safe cleaning of face coverings.
- Enhancement – Workers must:
  - adopt good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
  - be familiar with and follow respiratory hygiene guidance.
  - follow good practice on the safe use, storage, disposal and cleaning of face masks/coverings.

## D3. Physical Distancing

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- Enhancement – Employers must:
  - provide for physical distancing across all work activities. This may be achieved in a number of ways:
    - implement a no hand shaking policy.
    - where office work is essential, free office capacity must be used as much as is reasonably practicable and work organised in such a way that multiple occupancy of office premises is avoided and physical distances maintained. Note: Government advice under the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 continues to recommend that working from home continues as much as possible.
    - organise workers into teams or pods who consistently work and take breaks together. The teams should be as small as is reasonably practicable in the context of the work to be done.
    - organise breaks in such a way as to facilitate maintenance of physical distancing during breaks.
    - reorganise and rearrange working and break areas. For example, placing tables and chairs far enough apart in canteens.
    - consider closing canteen facilities if public health measures including social distancing cannot be facilitated. If closing, provide information on alternative delivery options. Note: by providing canteen facilities in the workplace in a controlled manner, this can reduce the need for workers to congregate in other less well-controlled locations outside the workplace (i.e., cars and shops).
    - stagger canteen use and extend serving times.
    - implement a queue management system with correct distance markings to avoid queues at food counters, tray return points and checkouts.
    - put in place card payment methods where practicable.
    - allocate specific times for collections, appointments and deliveries.
    - conduct meetings as much as possible using online remote means. Where face-to-face meetings are necessary, these must be arranged in line with the Government advice that is in place at the time of holding the meeting. Furthermore, the length of the meeting and the numbers attending should be kept to a minimum and participants must maintain physical distancing at all times. Proper ventilation, for example open windows, should also be in place. Attendance in a meeting room for a prolonged period may result in attendees being considered close contacts should an outbreak occur.
    - provide one-way systems for access/egress routes in the workplace/canteen where practicable.
    - adapt existing sign-in/sign-out measures and systems, for example, biometrics/turnstiles.
    - ensure that workers sharing collective accommodation at a place of work are grouped in fixed teams or pods that are as small as is reasonably practicable and consist of individuals who also work together. As far as is reasonably practicable:
      - each team or pod should, where reasonably practicable, be provided with their own communal facilities (washrooms, kitchens and communal rooms)

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- in order to avoid the additional burden of shift-wise use and the necessity to clean between occupancy by different teams. If this is not possible, employers should implement phased use and an enhanced cleaning regime.
- accommodation must be regularly cleaned and ventilated either manually (by opening windows and doors) or mechanically.
  - sleeping accommodation should normally be occupied singly.
  - additional rooms must be provided for early isolation of infected persons.
  - prevent gatherings of workers in the workplace at the beginning and end of working hours, such as, at time recording terminals and in changing rooms, washrooms, locker rooms and showers.
  - implement physical distancing during any outdoor work activity. For outdoor work activities, facilities for frequent hand hygiene should be provided and should be located close to where workers are working. Outdoor toilet facilities, if reasonably practicable, should also be considered.
  - Enhancement - In settings where 2-metre worker separation cannot be ensured by organisational means, alternative protective measures should be put in place, for example:
    - Maintain a distance of at least 1 metre or as much distance as is reasonably practicable.
    - Minimise any direct worker contact and provide hand washing facilities, and other hand hygiene aids, such as hand sanitisers, wipes etc. that are readily accessible so workers can perform hand hygiene as soon as the work task is complete.
    - Install physical barriers, such as clear plastic sneeze guards between workers.
    - Provide PPE as appropriate.
    - Provide face coverings in line with public health advice

Enhancement - Note: Wearing of masks is not a substitute for the IPC measures outlined above but they may be used in addition to these measures especially where maintaining physical/social distancing is difficult. If masks are worn, they should be clean and they should not be shared or handled by other colleagues.

Enhancement - Note: Screens do not need to be floor to ceiling but should be of an adequate height (e.g., cover a person in a standing position) and width to block the pathway from the nose and mouth to the face and workspace of the other persons. Screens may be fixed or mobile depending on requirements including emergency access. Screens should be regularly cleaned with detergent and water.

#### D4. Pre-Return to Work Measures

- Addition – Reference to the new EU “traffic lights” approach to travel
- Enhancement – Workers must:
  - complete and submit the pre-return to work form before they return to work.
  - inform their employer if there are any other circumstances relating to COVID-19, not included in the form, which may need to be disclosed to allow their safe return to work. For example, if they are in the very high-risk category.
  - stay at home if displaying any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or feeling unwell.

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- self-isolate or restrict their movements at home in line with their family doctor and/or public health advice.
- contact their family doctor promptly if they have any COVID-19 symptoms.
- undergo any COVID-19 testing that may be required in their workplace as part of mass or serial testing as advised by Public Health and implemented by their employer.
- restrict their movements if they:
  - are a close contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (even if a test or tests performed within the 14-day period of restricted movements comes back as “not-detected”).
  - live with someone who has symptoms of the virus.
  - have travelled outside of Ireland, unless they fall into certain defined categories
- self-isolate for the advised period and not return to work until symptom free and free from fever for the last 5 days of the period if they have had a positive test for COVID19.
- Participate in any induction training provided by the employer on their return to the workplace.
- cooperate with their employer in relation to prevention measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene and wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) where required.
- complete any temperature testing implemented by their employer on foot of public health advice.
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#### D5. Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 in the Workplace

- Enhancement – Employers must:
  - include a defined response structure that identifies the team(s) responsible for responding to a suspected case in the COVID-19 response plan.
  - appoint a case manager/designated contact person(s) for dealing with suspected cases.
  - identify a designated isolation area in advance. The designated area and the route to the designated area should be easily accessible and as far as is reasonable and practicable should be accessible by people with disabilities.
  - take into account the possibility of one or more persons displaying the signs of COVID-19 and have additional isolation areas available or another contingency plan for dealing with same.
  - ensure the designated area has the ability to isolate the person behind a closed door.
  - Where a closed-door area is not possible, the employer must provide for an area away from other workers.
    - provide as is reasonably practicable:
      - Ventilation, i.e. via a window.
      - Tissues, hand sanitiser, disinfectant and/or wipes.
      - PPE, gloves, masks.
      - Waste bags/bins.
- Enhancement - If a worker displays symptoms of COVID-19 during work, the case manager/designated contact person and the response team must:

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- isolate the worker and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.
- provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. The worker should wear the mask if in a common area with other people or while exiting the premises.
- assess whether the unwell individual can immediately be directed to go home to call their family doctor and continue treatment and self-isolation at home.
- facilitate the person presenting with symptoms remaining in isolation if they cannot immediately go home and facilitate them calling their family doctor. The worker should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- arrange transport home or to hospital for medical assessment if required. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- carry out an assessment of the incident, which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.
- arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and work areas involved.
- provide advice and assistance if contacted by the Department of Public Health or HSE in relation to contact tracing.

#### D6. At Risk Workers

- Enhancement - If a worker in the very high risk or high-risk categories cannot work from home and must be in the workplace, employers must make sure that they are supported to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from others at the workplace. However, employers should enable such workers to work from home where possible.

#### D7. Working from Home

- Enhancement - All staff should continue to work from home to the greatest extent possible. The employer should develop and consult on any working from home policy in conjunction with workers and/or Trades Unions

#### D8. Business Travel

- Enhancement –
  - Business trips and face-to-face interactions should be reduced to the absolute minimum and, as far as is reasonably practicable, online or other alternatives should be made available (e.g., telephone or video conferencing).
  - For necessary work-related trips, the use of the same vehicles by multiple workers is not encouraged. The number of workers who share a vehicle – at the same time or one after the other – should be kept to a minimum as far as is reasonably practicable, for example by assigning a vehicle to a fixed team or pod.
  - Workers should be provided with hand sanitisers and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, with cleaning taking place before and after each shift.

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- Workers should be encouraged to travel alone to/from and for work. If using their personal cars for work, they should be accompanied by a maximum of one passenger who shall be seated in adherence with physical distancing guidance. Where workers need to share a work vehicle, or where travelling to work with others in a vehicle, a face covering or mask should be worn in line with public health advice.
- Businesses should refer to the latest Government advice in relation to essential overseas travel for employees. Advice on travel will change as the levels within the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 increase or decrease nationally or regionally.
- Enhancement – Note: From 9 November, Ireland is implementing the new EU “traffic lights” approach to travel, which applies to countries in the EU/EEA (+UK). The advice for travel to these countries remains is “exercise a high degree of caution.” The general advice for any other overseas travel remains “avoid non-essential travel” or some cases, “do not travel.” Travel within the island of Ireland can continue as normal, subject to domestic public health restrictions on gov.ie.

Travellers from abroad with an essential function or need as set out in paragraph 19 of the EU Council Recommendation, including passengers travelling for the purposes of an imperative business reason, are not requested to restrict their movements while carrying out that essential function.

Irish residents, who have travelled and carried out an essential function in another region, but who have otherwise restricted their movement while in that region, are not requested to restrict their movements on return

#### D9. Contractors and Visitors

- Enhancement - Workers, contractors or visitors visiting workplaces where there are restrictions arising from the risk of COVID-19 should follow the onsite IPC measures and take into account public health advice around preventing the spread of COVID-19. A system for recording visits to the site(s) by workers/others as well as visits by workers to other workplaces should be put in place by employers and completed by workers as required (contact log).

#### D10. Cleaning

- Enhancement – Employers must:
  - implement thorough and regular cleaning of frequently touched surfaces. If disinfection of an area is required, it must be performed in addition to cleaning, never as a substitute for cleaning.
  - ensure contact/touch surfaces such as table tops, work equipment, door handles and handrails are visibly clean at all times and are cleaned at least twice daily.
  - implement modified cleaning intervals for rooms and work areas. This applies especially for washroom facilities, lockers and communal spaces. Cleaning should be performed at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty.
  - provide workers with essential cleaning materials to keep their own workspace clean (for example wipes/disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins/bags).

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- provide workers with hand sanitisers and cleaning equipment for their work vehicle, with cleaning taking place before and after each shift.
- increase number of waste collection points and ensure these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.
- modify use of hot desks to ensure that these are made available to identified staff and have appropriate cleaning materials in place for workers to clean the area before and after using.

Note: Personal waste, for example, used tissues, wipes and cleaning material, should be disposed of in a plastic rubbish refuse bag. When the bag is full, it should be tied and placed into a second refuse bag and tied again. Once the bag has been tied securely, it should be left in a safe location for three days (72 hours) before putting out for collection. Other waste can be put out for collection without delay

#### D11. Use of PPE – Personal Protective Equipment

##### ○ Enhancement

- All IPC measures and hygiene compliance as set out above should be applied and maintained in all circumstances.
- PPE must be selected based on the hazard and risk to the worker.
- Employers must provide PPE and protective clothing to workers in accordance with identified COVID-19 exposure risks and in line with public health advice.
- Workers should be trained in the proper use, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE.
- Gloves are generally not required for IPC purposes. Where gloves are necessary, they must not be considered a substitute for hand hygiene and hands must be cleaned whenever gloves are removed. Gloves should not create an additional occupational hazard (such as gloves getting caught in rotating parts). Limitations on wearing time and workers' individual susceptibilities (allergies, etc.) must also be considered.
- For particular PPE, such as respirators, these must be properly fitted and periodically refitted, as appropriate.
- PPE needs to be consistently and properly worn when required. In addition, it must be regularly inspected, cleaned, maintained and replaced as necessary. Hands should be sanitised before donning and after doffing PPE

Note: Face Shields designed and authorised as PPE against respiratory droplets should not be mistaken or used as a substitute for impact protection PPE in the workplace, for example, where standard CE marked Face Visor/Face protection PPE is required for work activities such as welding, grinding or to protect against chemical splashes.

#### D12. Customer Facing Roles

##### ○ Enhancement – Employers must:

- eliminate physical interaction between workers and customers as much as is reasonably practicable through revised working arrangements, for example through provision of online or phone orders, contactless delivery or managed entry.
- provide hand sanitisers at entry/exit points.

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- install physical barriers and clear markings to ensure that contact between workers and customers is kept to a minimum and to ensure that queues do not form between customers as they wait to be served.
- implement a cleaning regime to ensure that contact points for workers and customers are kept visibly cleaned at all times.
- display the advice on the COVID-19 measures in visible locations to ensure that customers are also adhering to what is required.
- implement and adopt public health regulations in relation to use of face coverings in shops, shopping centres and other indoor settings.
- provide masks to workers who need to interact with customers/others where a physical distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.

#### Section 4. Worker Role – Workplace and Community Settings

- Addition
  - Workplace Settings
    - In the workplace, the worker should follow the requirements set out in this Protocol and with any specific direction from the employer. Workers should also communicate and engage with the Lead Worker Representative as appropriate.
    - They should also adopt physical distancing and good hygiene practices, such as frequent hand washing, respiratory etiquette to protect themselves and their work colleagues against infection and should seek medical advice if unwell. If a worker has any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or if feeling unwell, they should not attend work.
  - Community Settings
    - Outside of work, workers should be encouraged to travel alone if using their cars to get to and from work. If this is not possible, workers travelling to/from work together should travel as a team/pod and use face coverings.
    - Those travelling on public transport to and from work must wear face coverings and follow physical distancing guidelines. In addition, workers who may share accommodation outside of work should be advised to adhere to public health and Government advice.
    - Workers should avoid congregating in particular settings outside of work. For example, congregating in shops when buying lunch. Similarly, congregating in particular social settings in and out of the home is also something that workers should avoid as such settings (household gatherings, parties) are known areas where COVID-19 transmission is very high.
    - Outside of work, workers should practice the same IPC measures, physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory etiquette and adhere to the specific requirements of the Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19 as announced by Government.

#### Section 5. Occupational Health and Safety Measures and Recommendations

- Enhancements
  - Where the IPC measures implemented requires changes to work activities, the employer is required to review and update their occupational health and safety risk assessments and safety statement.
  - As employers implement the above measures in the workplace to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19 for workers, specific occupational health and safety measures may also need to be considered and implemented.

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- Employers should first take into account the most up-to-date official public health advice and guidance from the Department of Health and the HPSC on how to mitigate the health risk including measures advised by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for work related travel.
  - Where a risk of exposure to COVID-19 is identified in the COVID-19 response plan, an occupational health and safety risk assessment should also be completed. All of the public health and occupational health and safety measures should be developed in consultation with workers and/or Trades Unions and ultimately communicated to workers and others at the workplace.
  - Employers should also communicate with safety representatives selected or appointed under the occupational health and safety legislation and consult with workers on safety measures to be implemented in the workplace. Further information on the role of Safety Representative is available on the HSA website.
- A. Reporting Requirements if a worker contracts COVID19
    - Enhancement
      - There is no requirement for an employer to notify the HSA if a worker contracts COVID-19. Diseases or occupational illnesses are not reportable under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Reporting of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences) Regulations 2016.
- B. First Aid
    - Enhancement
      - In the event that first aid is required in the workplace, it may not be possible to maintain a distance of 2 metres. Workers with a specific role in acting as first responders should be provided with updated training on infection prevention and control principles including performance of hand hygiene and appropriate use of personal protective equipment when delivering first aid.
- C. Mental Health and Wellbeing
    - Enhancement
      - Employers should put in place support for workers who may be suffering from anxiety or stress. Workers, when they return to work or as they continue to work, may go through traumatic events such as the serious illness or death of a relative or friend, or be experiencing financial difficulties or problems with their personal relationships.
      - Workers who are returning to the workplace after a period of isolation or working from home are also likely to have concerns about the risk of infection or changes to their job due to the implementation of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
      - Employers should provide workers with information on publicly available sources of support and advice and information about the prevention and control measures taken in the workplace to reduce the risk of infection.
      - Employers should ensure workers are made aware of and have access to any business provided Employee Assistance Programmes or Occupational Health service.
      - The HSA has a range of supports, resources and advice such as:
        - dealing with stress as a result of the changes in a worker’s personal and/or working life during COVID-19.

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- a free online risk assessment tool for addressing work related stress: WorkPositive.
    - The Government’s “In This Together Campaign” also provides information on minding one’s mental health as well as tips on staying active and connected and may be useful for use by employers and workers.
- D. Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)
  - Enhancement
    - Natural ventilation through the introduction of fresh air into the workplace e.g. opening doors and windows. Cross-ventilation is a good option for window ventilation as it facilitates the quick exchange of room air for fresh air through widely opened windows opposite to each other where possible. Propping open internal doors may increase air movement and ventilation rate. (Note: fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire).
    - Mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. These provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings such as buildings and vehicles. Switching off air conditioning is not required to manage the risk of COVID19. However, as many air conditioning units just heat, cool and recirculate the air, it is important to check ventilation systems to ensure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air (from a clean source) and that recirculation of untreated air is avoided. Where workplaces have Local Exhaust Ventilation, the make-up air should ideally come from outdoor air rather than from adjacent rooms.
- E. Legionella
  - Enhancement
    - For some places of work such as hotels, leisure facilities, offices, dental clinics and hairdressers, the employer needs to put in place control measures to avoid the potential for Legionnaires’ disease. Further advice on the prevention of Legionnaires’ disease is available from HSA.

The Work Safely Protocol provides additional guidance and information including;

- Where to access advice for employers and workers
- Where to access information on Public Health and Occupational Health and Safety
- Where to access information on Business Continuity and Supports
- Further Public Health Advice and Information
  - Management of a case or cases (outbreak) in the workplace
  - Choosing a hand sanitiser
  - Use of identified teams or pods
  - Face coverings – face mask – visors
  - Sectoral specific advice and guidance

For further advice or guidance, please email [info@compliplus.com](mailto:info@compliplus.com) or call 046 9245658. Additional information is available on our the website [www.compliplus.com](http://www.compliplus.com)