



## **WORKING SAFELY DURING COVID 19 IN FIRE SERVICE PLACES OF WORK – OPERATIONAL AND NON-OPERATIONAL**

**GUIDANCE FOR EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES**

July 2020

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# Introduction

Fire Stations, Control Rooms, Training Centres, General Offices, Fire Service Premises, Fire Engines.

## What do we mean by Fire service place of work, Operational and non-operational.

This guidance aims to support Fire and Rescue Services to work safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We hope it gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to continue or restart - operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) we understand how important it is that staff feel safe in their work place and employers adopt supportive practice which ensures the health, safety and wellbeing of staff when staff are operating within or are returning to the workplace.

The guidance has been produced to assist services to make their buildings COVID secure whilst considering the human factors which affect our people. The government is clear that staff should not be forced into an unsafe workplace.

The guidance has been developed utilising approved guidance from government, NFCC and Public Health Bodies and the HSE.

The document will updated as guidance changes and can be found at

<https://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/COVID-19>.

## How to use this guidance

This document sets out guidance on how to work safely. It gives practical considerations of how this can be applied in the workplace.

Each Fire and Rescue Service will need to adapt this into the specific actions administered locally.

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities. It is essential that, you continue to comply with your existing obligations. This includes those relating to individuals with protected characteristics, who may be identified as particularly vulnerable to the virus. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency staff, contractors and other people, as well as your employees, volunteers and visitors.

To help you decide which actions to take, you need to carry out an appropriate COVID-19 risk assessment, just as you would for other health and safety related hazards. This risk assessment should be done in consultation with trade unions or employees as appropriate.

# 1. Thinking about Risk

## **Objective: that all employers carry out a Covid-19 risk assessment**

Failure to complete a risk assessment which takes account of COVID-19, or completing a risk assessment but failing to put in place sufficient measures to manage the risk of COVID-19, could constitute a breach of health and safety law. The actions the enforcing authority can take include the provision of specific advice to employers to support them to achieve the required standard, through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements. Serious breaches and failure to comply with enforcement notices can constitute a criminal offence, with serious fines and even imprisonment for up to two years. There is also a wider system of enforcement, which includes specific obligations and conditions for licensed premises.

Employers are expected to respond to any advice or notices issued by enforcing authorities rapidly and are required to do so within any timescales imposed by the enforcing authorities. The vast majority of employers are responsible and will join with the UK's fight against COVID-19 by working with the government and their sector bodies to protect their workers and the public. However, inspectors are carrying out compliance checks nationwide to ensure that employers are taking the necessary steps.

Employers must follow all instructions from authorities in the event of new local restrictions.

Everyone needs to assess and manage the risks of COVID-19. As an employer, you also have a legal responsibility to protect staff and others from risk to their health and safety. This means you need to think about the risks they face and do everything Reasonably practicable to minimise them, recognising you cannot completely eliminate the risk of COVID-19.

You must make sure that the risk assessment for your organisation addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform your decisions and control measures. A risk assessment identifies sensible measures to control the risks in your workplace. There are interactive tools available to support you from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/assessment.htm>

Employers have a duty to consult employees on health and safety. The people who do the work are often the best people to understand the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. Involving them in making decisions show that you take their health and safety seriously. **You must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there isn't one, a representative chosen by staff. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be.**

If concerns still cannot be resolved, see below for further steps you can take.

Where the enforcing authority - such as the HSE or your local authority - identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with the relevant public health legislation and guidance to control public health risks, they will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. For example, this would cover employers not taking appropriate action to socially distance, where possible. The actions the HSE can take include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Contact your line manager

Submit an incident report

Contact your trade union if you have one

Use the HSE form available at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/concerns.htm>

Contact HSE by phone on **0300 003 1647**

# 1.1 Managing Risk

**Objective: to reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures, in order of priority**

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

- In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
- The Fire and Rescue Service should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option to those who can work from home. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 1m plus apart extending the distance wherever possible).
- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, Services should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the organisation to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff. Where possible maintain 2m social distancing, however, 1m is acceptable with appropriate risk mitigation.

Further mitigating actions may include:

- Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
- Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.
- Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
- Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.
- Where reasonably practicable consider reducing the number of people each person has contact with

by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).

- Where other mitigation actions cannot be maintained then a surgical facemask must be worn.
- Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.
- In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.
- Services may wish to consider the use of disposable surgical masks or face coverings for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk or where the wearing of such provides reassurance to the employee and as such supports their return to work.
- Services may wish to provide disposable surgical masks to staff who use public transport to attend work.

The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you should consider as you go through this process. You should also consider [NFCC's COVID-19 Station advice](#) and its [PPE guidance](#) when operating in operational and frontline environments. Additional controls should not inadvertently increase the risk of viral transmission the individual or others.

Where a FRS is unable to comply with any element of this guidance, a local risk assessment should be undertaken so that appropriate mitigation can be implemented where reasonably practicable.

# 1.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. If possible, you should consider publishing the results on your website. Below you will find a notice you should display in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance.



We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared results with the people who work here

We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance

We have taken all reasonable steps to **help people work from home**

We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a **1m plus distance in the workplace**

Where people cannot be socially distanced, we have done everything reasonable practicable to **manage transmission**

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Who to contact: Your Health & Safety Representative  
(or the Health and Safety Executive at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or 0300 003 1647)

# 2. Who should go to work

**Objective: That everyone should work from home, unless they cannot work from home.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

Staff should work from home if at all possible. Consider who is needed to be on-site; for example:

- Workers in roles critical for organisation and operational continuity, safe facility management, or regulatory requirements and which cannot be performed remotely.
- Workers in critical roles which might be performed remotely, but who are unable to work remotely due to home circumstances or the unavailability of safe enabling equipment.

Planning for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively.

Monitoring the wellbeing of people who are working from home and helping them stay connected to the rest of the workforce, especially if the majority of their colleagues are on-site.

Keeping in touch with off-site staff on their working arrangements including their welfare, mental and physical health and personal security.

Providing equipment for people to work at home safely and effectively, for example, remote access to work systems.

## 2.1 Protecting people who are at higher risk

**Objective: To protect clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.**

- Clinically extremely vulnerable individuals (see definition in Appendix) have been strongly advised not to work outside the home.
- Clinically vulnerable individuals, who are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions, see definition in Appendix), have been asked to take extra care in observing social distancing and should be helped to work from home, either in their current role or in an alternative role.

• If clinically vulnerable (but not extremely clinically vulnerable) individuals cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to stay socially distanced from others. If they have to spend time within 1m plus of others, you should carefully assess whether this involves an acceptable level of risk. As for any workplace risk you must take into account specific duties to those with protected characteristics, including, for example, expectant mothers who are, as always, entitled to suspension on full pay if suitable roles cannot be found. Particular attention should also be paid to people who live with clinically extremely vulnerable individuals.

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

Providing support for staff around mental health and wellbeing. This could include advice or telephone support.

See current guidance for advice on who is in the clinically extremely vulnerable and clinically vulnerable groups.

## 2.2 People who need to self-isolate

**Objective: To make sure individuals who are advised to stay at home under NHS test and trace workplace guidance do not physically come to work. This includes individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19 as well as those who live in a household with someone who has symptoms.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

Enabling staff to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.

See [current guidance](#) for people who have symptoms and those who live with others who have symptoms.

## 2.3 Equality in the workplace

**Objective: To treat everyone in your workplace equally.**

- In applying this guidance, employers should be mindful of the particular needs of different groups of staff or individuals.
- It is breaking the law to discriminate, directly or indirectly, against anyone because of a protected characteristic such

as age, sex or disability.

- Employers also have particular responsibilities towards disabled staff and those who are new or expectant mothers.

- There has been a disproportionate impact of the virus on older people and workers from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. The risk assessment of those colleagues needs especially sensitive

**Steps that will usually be needed:**



Understanding and taking into account the particular circumstances of those with different protected characteristics.



Involving and communicating appropriately with staff whose protected characteristics might either expose them to a different degree of risk, or might make any steps

you are thinking about inappropriate or challenging for them.



Considering whether you need to put in place any particular measures or adjustments to take account of your duties under the equalities legislation.



Making reasonable adjustments to avoid disabled staff being put at a disadvantage, and assessing the health and safety risks for new or expectant mothers.



Making sure that the steps you take do not have an unjustifiable negative impact on some groups compared to others, for example, those with caring responsibilities or those with religious commitments.

# 3. Social distancing at work

**Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible, including while arriving at and departing from work, while in work and when travelling between sites.**

- You **must** maintain social distancing in the workplace wherever possible.
- **Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full** in relation to a particular activity, organisations should consider whether that activity needs to continue in order to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff. Mitigating actions include:
  - Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.
  - Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible - whenever possible below 15 minutes.
  - Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face- to-face) whenever possible.
  - Where reasonably practicable, and service delivery allows, reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering, or alignment to team working patterns' (so each person works with only a few others).
  - Social distancing applies to all parts of an organisation, not just the place where people spend most of their time, but also entrances and exits, break rooms, canteens and similar settings. These are often the most challenging areas to maintain social distancing.
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk.

## Covid-19 Safety Checkpoint 3.1 Safety Checkpoints

**Objective: To introduce safety checkpoints for key areas to screen for symptoms, and perform hand hygiene. This is to reduce the risk of transmission within these areas.**

Within organisations such as the Fire and Rescue Service, it is not always possible to fully comply with the social distancing guidelines outlined by PHE due to the nature of delivering an emergency service.

Given the range of functions undertaken across the Fire and Rescue Services consideration must be given to whether the activity should continue for the organisation to continue to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff.

**Safety checkpoints include:**

Notices at all building entry points to remind employees not to enter if they, or anyone in their household, have COVID-19 symptoms, with instructions of what to do if they do have symptoms.

Staff have a responsibility to check for symptoms prior to attending for work. Covid-19 Safety check points will be introduced to reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19.

- Hand hygiene/ hand wash station
- Symptom screening point
- Temperature testing point\*
- **If an employee or anyone within their household has any of the following, they should not proceed into the building/ area:**
  - **New continuous cough**
  - **Fever/ temperature of 37.8°C or above**
  - **New loss of, or change in, ability to taste or smell**

\*Fever remains a criterion for the case definition and if a person has a fever as the only symptom the advice is for them to self-isolate. Therefore, whilst not mandatory, temperature checking as part of the symptom screening may be of value.

FRS may provide facilities for staff to take their temperature at the safety checkpoints, for use if they feel feverish, prior to the start of their shift or if they become feverish during their shift.

# COVID-19 SAFETY CHECKPOINT



## HAND HYGIENE

Apply hand sanitiser before entering this department.

Hand hygiene must be performed for at least 20 seconds



## SYMPTOM CHECK

Inform your line manager if you have:

- A new continuous cough
- Temperature or fever of 37.8 or above
- A new loss/change in taste
- A new loss/change in smell



## TEMPERATURE CHECK

A temperature check should be carried out if you feel feverish before entering this room.

the result must read below 37.8 C

**if you feel unwell, have a new continuous cough a temperature above 37.8, loss/change of taste/smell inform your manager immediately by phone**

## 3.2 Coming to work and leaving work

**Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible, on arrival and departure and to ensure handwashing upon arrival.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Staggering arrival and departure times at work to reduce crowding into and out of the workplace, taking account of the impact on those with protected characteristics.

Providing additional parking or facilities such as bike-racks to help people walk, run, or cycle to work where possible.

Limiting passengers in corporate vehicles, for example, work minibuses. This could include leaving seats empty.

Reducing congestion, for example, by having more entry points to the workplace.

Providing more storage for staff for clothes and bags.

Using markings and introducing one-way flow at entry and exit points.

Providing additional hand hygiene facilities e.g. handwashing facilities or hand sanitiser stations

## 3.3 Moving around buildings and work areas

**Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible while people travel through the workplace.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Reducing movement by discouraging non-essential trips within buildings and sites, for example, restricting access to some areas, encouraging use of radios or telephones, where permitted, and cleaning them between use.

Restricting access between different areas of a building or site.

Reducing job and location rotation, particularly where this involved moving between different staff groups.

Introducing more one-way flow through buildings.

Reducing maximum occupancy for lifts, providing hand sanitiser for the operation of lifts and encouraging use of stairs

wherever possible.

Making sure that people with disabilities are able to access lifts.

Regulating use of high traffic areas including corridors, lifts turnstiles and walkways to maintain social distancing.

## 3.4 General office areas/ Control rooms

**Objective: To maintain social distancing between individuals when they are at their workstations.**

- For people who work in one place, workstations should allow them to maintain social distancing wherever possible.
- People should not congregate, gather or have group discussions unless essential for operational functions, and in such circumstances social distancing should be maintained.
- If it is not possible to keep workstations 1m apart then Fire and Rescue Services should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the organisation to operate and if so, take all mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission (see section 3.0 Social distancing at work).
- Consideration should be given to restricting access to essential staff only in key areas e.g. control rooms/ Fire stations
- Steps for consideration where reasonably practicable:
- Managing occupancy levels to enable social distancing:
- Review layouts and processes to allow people to work further apart from each other (ideally 1m plus, but if not as far apart as practicable)
- Where it is not possible to move workstations further apart:
- Arrange people/desks to work side by side or facing away from each other rather than face to face
- Using floor tape or paint on uncarpeted flooring to mark areas to help staff keep a 1m plus distance

Avoid use of hot desks and spaces. Where not possible (such as in control centres or training facilities), clean workstations between different occupants including shared equipment.

In control rooms/Fire stations:

- Align staff to teams where possible and/or consider reducing relief working across rotas
- Clean workstation areas at the beginning and end of shifts and after a break period
- Use messaging facilities where possible (and if not, maintain social distancing of 1m plus where practical)
- Ensure entry points are designated as safety checkpoints as above and one way flows are established where possible
- Restrict access for staff to only those working in the control room/Fire station, and where possible, avoid working in “dual roles” (for example in an operational and control room rotational role)
- Increase cleaning frequencies particularly in relation to contact points such as door handles, etc.
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk

### 3.5 Meeting rooms and areas

**Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in meetings.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Using remote working tools to avoid in-person meetings.
- Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 1m plus separation throughout.
- Avoiding transmission during meetings, for example, avoiding sharing notepads/paper, pens and other objects.
- Provide hand sanitiser in meeting rooms. Holding meetings outdoors or in well-ventilated rooms whenever possible.

For areas where regular meetings take

place, using floor signage to help people maintain social distancing.

Ensure work surfaces and equipment are wiped down following meetings.

### 3.6 Training Centres

**Objective: To reduce transmission due to face-to-face meetings and maintain social distancing in training centres**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Consider virtual learning platforms and remote working tools.
- Consider staggering practical assessment to limit the numbers of students in the area
- Group work should be undertaken in line with social distancing principles, with considerations for working side by side instead of face to face
- Avoid transmission during training sessions, for example, avoid sharing pens and other objects.
- Provide hand sanitiser, wipes and tissues in training rooms.
- Ensure work surfaces and equipment are wiped down following training sessions.
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk.

### 3.7 Common areas - including rest rooms and break areas

**Objective: To maintain social distancing while using common areas.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Work collaboratively with partners/tenants in multi-tenant sites/buildings to ensure consistency across common areas, for example, receptions and staircases.
- Stagger break times to reduce pressure on break rooms or canteens.
- Use safe outside areas for breaks.
- Create additional space by using other parts of the workplace or building that have been freed up by remote working.

- Consider installing screens to protect staff in public facing receptions or similar areas.
- Encourage staff to bring their own food, to prevent the need to go out to get food/drink.
- Encourage staff to remain on-site and, when not possible, maintaining social distancing while off-site
- Reconfigure seating and tables to maintain spacing and reduce face-to-face interactions.
- Ensure people tidy away and clean any equipment, crockery and cutlery after use.
- Regulate use of locker rooms, changing areas and other facility areas to reduce concurrent usage.
- Encourage storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, for example, lockers and during shifts.
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk..

### 3.8 Social distancing in vehicles

**Objective: To maintain social distancing wherever possible between individuals**

- Fire service personnel may not always be able to maintain the recommended social distance whilst at work. Daily duties will require staff to travel in fire engines and/or other fire service vehicles whereby several staff members may be present in the cab area of the fire engine or present in a fire service vehicle. It is understood that it is not practicable to create additional space in, or partition, the vehicle cab or fire service vehicles and this is therefore not recommended.
- FRS may wish to make surgical masks available for staff use in circumstances where the control measures in place are not deemed sufficient to manage the risk.
- Wearing a face mask in these circumstances can be sessional use i.e. don a fluid resistant surgical mask at the beginning of the journey and keep this on until the end of the job, unless required to change or upgrade level of mask due to the nature of the incident.

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- All operational staff should have been through a safety checkpoint prior to coming on duty.
- Devise mitigating measures where staff have no alternative but to work within 1m to minimise the risk of transmission, including:
  - Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
  - Limit unnecessary time in confined cab areas
  - Ensure vehicles are well-ventilated to increase the flow of air, for example, by opening a window
  - Sitting side-by-side not being face-to-face
  - Limit non-essential people in fire service vehicles

Where reasonably practicable consider reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)

Ensure regular cleaning of vehicles, in particular, between different users

### 3.9 Accidents, security and other incident

**Objective: To prioritise safety during incidents.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

- In an emergency, for example, an accident, fire or break-in, in the workplace or outside / enroute to work, people do not have to stay 1m apart if it would be unsafe.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should don PPE if they have it available and pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands.

# 4. Managing your visitors and contractors

## 4.1 Manage contacts

**Objective: To minimise the number of unnecessary visits to offices.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

- Encouraging visits via remote connection/ working where this is an option.
- Where site visits are required, site guidance on social distancing and hygiene should be explained to visitors on or before arrival.
- Limiting the number of visitors at any one time.
- Limiting visitor times to a specific time window and restricting access to required visitors only.
- Determining if schedules for essential services and contractor visits can be revised to reduce interaction and overlap between people, for example, carrying out services at night.
- Maintaining a record of all visitors, if this is practical.
- Revising visitor arrangements to ensure social distancing and hygiene, for example, where someone physically signs in with the same pen in receptions

## 4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

**Objective: To make sure people understand what they need to do to maintain safety.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

- Providing clear guidance on social distancing and hygiene to people on arrival, for example, signage or visual aids and before arrival, for example, by phone, on the website or by email.
- Establishing host responsibilities relating to COVID-19 and providing any necessary training for people who act as hosts for visitors.
- Reviewing entry and exit routes for visitors and contractors to minimise contact with other people.
- Coordinating and working collaboratively with landlords and other tenants in multi-tenant sites, for example, shared working spaces.

# 5. Cleaning the workplace

## 5.1 Before reopening

**Objective: To make sure that any site or location that has been closed or partially operated is clean and ready to restart, including:**

- An assessment for all sites, or parts of sites, that have been closed, before restarting work.
- Carrying out cleaning procedures and providing hand sanitiser before restarting work.

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

Checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings or you are unsure, advice can be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

Opening windows and doors frequently to encourage ventilation, where possible.

## 5.2 Keeping the workplace clean

**Objective: To keep the workplace clean and prevent transmission by touching contaminated surfaces.**

Frequent cleaning of work areas and equipment between uses, using your usual cleaning products.

Frequent cleaning of objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, such as door handles and keyboards, and making sure there are adequate disposal arrangements.

Clearing workspaces, removing waste and belongings from the work area at the end of a shift.

Limiting or restricting use of high-touch items and equipment, for example, printers or whiteboards.

If you are cleaning after a known or suspected case of COVID-19 then you should refer to the specific guidance.

## 5.3 Hygiene – handwashing, sanitation facilities and toilets

**Objective: To help everyone keep good hygiene through the working day**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Using signs and posters to build awareness of good handwashing technique, the need to increase handwashing frequency, avoid touching your face and to cough or sneeze into a tissue which is binned safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available.

Providing regular reminders, posters in prominent places and signage to maintain personal hygiene standards.

Providing hand sanitiser in multiple locations in addition to washrooms.

Setting clear use and cleaning guidance for toilets to ensure they are kept clean and social distancing is achieved as much as possible.

Enhancing cleaning for busy areas.

Providing more waste facilities and more frequent rubbish collection.

Where possible, providing paper towels as an alternative to hand dryers in handwashing facilities.

## 5.4 Changing rooms and showers

**Objective: To minimise the risk of transmission in changing rooms and showers.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

Where shower and changing facilities are required, setting clear use and cleaning guidance for showers, lockers and changing rooms to ensure they are kept clean and clear of personal items and that social distancing is achieved as much as possible.

Introducing enhanced cleaning of all facilities regularly during the day and at the end of the day.

## 5.5 Handling goods, merchandise and other materials, and onsite vehicles

**Objective: To reduce transmission through contact with objects that come into the workplace and vehicles at the worksite.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

■ Cleaning procedures for goods and merchandise entering the site.

■ Cleaning procedures for vehicles.

■ Introducing greater handwashing and handwashing facilities for staff handling goods and merchandise and providing hand sanitiser access where this is not practical.

■ Regular cleaning of vehicles that staff may take home.

■ Restricting non- FRS deliveries, for example, personal deliveries to staff.

# 6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings

PPE protects the user against health or safety risks at work. It can include items such as safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses. It also includes respiratory protective equipment; such as face masks.

Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so.

At the start of this document we described the steps you need to take to manage COVID-19 risk in the workplace. This includes working from home and staying 1m plus away from each other in the workplace if at all possible.

When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not specifically required, although in certain situations can have some benefit. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace. The most effective way to reduce the risk of transmission is through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering. The additional use of PPE should only be considered if other measures to maintain social distancing have been fully considered and are able to be maintained.

The exception is when attending operational incidents, or a small handful of other roles such as undertaking prevention work in the community for which Public Health England advises use of PPE. If you are in one of these groups, you should refer to the advice at:

- [Government PPE advice](#)
- [Decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings](#)
- [NFCC PPE guidance](#)

Workplaces should not unnecessarily encourage the use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings. FRS may wish to make surgical masks or face coverings 'readily' available for staff following a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

Supplies of PPE, including fluid resistant surgical masks (IIR), must continue to be prioritised for clinicians in operational response to patients due to the increased risk of transmission. Where the use of

facemasks may be needed for non-clinical settings in FRS premises, these should be type II surgical masks, and the FRS should provide a suitable supply.

Unless you are in a situation where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is very high, which is unlikely within the non-operational environments of the Fire and Rescue Service, your local risk assessment should reflect the fact that the role of PPE in providing additional protection is limited to where it is not possible to maintain the social distancing guidance. However, **if your risk assessment does show that PPE is required, then the respective FRS must provide the appropriate PPE in line with national guidance, free of charge to staff who need it.**

Any PPE provided must fit properly and staff should be competent in its use. The wearing of PPE should not be used in areas where it is possible to maintain social distancing.

**Each Fire and Rescue Service must have procedures in place to ensure the safe disposal of use PPE, which must be disposed of as category B (orange) clinical waste.**

## 6.1 Face coverings

There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

A face covering can be very simple and may be worn in enclosed spaces where social distancing isn't possible. It just needs to cover your mouth and nose.

**It is important to know that the evidence of the benefit of using a face covering to protect others is weak** and the effect is likely to be small, therefore face coverings are not a replacement for the other ways of managing risk, including minimising time spent in contact, using fixed teams and partnering for close-up work, and increasing hand and surface washing. These other measures remain the best ways of managing risk in the workplace and government would therefore not expect to see employers relying on face coverings as risk management for the purpose of their health and safety assessments.

Wearing a face covering is required by law when travelling as a passenger on public transport in England. This may therefore be necessary for staff travelling to and from work, and this will be their responsibility.

If a member of staff chooses to wear a face covering at work, employers should ensure they receive the following advice:

- If the wearing of a face covering is hindering you in undertaking your duties, you may be asked to remove it whilst at work.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- Change your face covering if it becomes damp.
- Continue to wash your hands regularly.

- Change and wash your face covering daily.
- If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it carefully in your usual waste.
- Practise social distancing wherever possible.

You can make face-coverings at home and can find guidance on how to do this and use them safely on GOV.UK.

Further advice is available at:

[NFCC PPE guidance](#)

# 7. Workforce management

## 7.1 Shift patterns and working groups

**Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Where possible, where staff are split into teams or shift groups, fixing these teams or shift groups so that where contact is unavoidable, this happens between the same people.

Identifying areas where people directly pass things to each other, for example office supplies, and finding ways to remove direct contact, such as using drop-off points or transfer zones.

7.1.2 - Objective: To provide guidance in an event of a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace

**Objective: To change the way work is organised to create distinct groups and reduce the number of contacts each employee has.**

**Steps that will usually be needed:**

As part of your risk assessment, you should ensure you have an up to date plan in case there is a COVID-19 outbreak. This plan should nominate a single point of contact (SPOC) where possible who should lead on contacting local Public Health teams.

If there is more than one case of COVID-19 associated with your workplace, you should contact your local PHE health protection team to report the suspected outbreak. Find your local PHE health protection team.

## 7.2 Work- related travel

### 7.2.1 Cars, accommodation and visits

**Objective: To avoid unnecessary work travel and keep people safe when they do need to travel between locations.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Minimising non-essential travel – consider remote options first.

Minimising the number of people travelling together in any one vehicle, using fixed travel partners, increasing ventilation when possible and avoiding sitting face-to-face.

Cleaning shared vehicles between shifts or on handover.

Staff should minimise unnecessary journeys and make appropriate and safe transport arrangements.

Where staff are required to stay away from their home, centrally logging the stay and making sure any overnight accommodation meets social distancing guidelines

## 7.2 Work- related travel

### 7.2.2 Deliveries to Other Sites

**Objective: To help staff delivering to other sites such as Fire stations, training centres, headquarters or delivering essential items to vulnerable people maintain social distancing and hygiene practices.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

Putting in place procedures to minimise person-to-person contact during deliveries to other sites.

Maintaining consistent pairing where two-person deliveries are required.

Minimising contact during exchange of deliveries and documentation, for example electronically signed and exchanged documents.

## 7.3 Communications and Training

### 7.3.1 Returning to work

**Objective: To make sure all staff understand COVID-19 related safety procedures.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Providing clear, consistent and regular communication to improve understanding and consistency of ways of working.
- Engaging with staff and their representatives through existing communication routes to explain and agree any changes in working arrangements.
- Developing communication and training materials for staff prior to returning to site, especially around new procedures for arrival at work.

### 7.3.2 Ongoing communications and signage

**Objective: To make sure all staff are kept up to date with how safety measures are being implemented or updated.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Ongoing engagement with staff (including through trades unions or employee representative groups) to monitor and understand any unforeseen impacts of changes to working environments.
- Awareness and focus on the importance of mental health at times of uncertainty. The government has published guidance on the mental health and [wellbeing aspects of coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).
- Using simple, clear messaging to explain guidelines using images and clear language, with consideration of groups for which English may not be their first language.
- Using visual communications, for example, notice boards or signage, to explain changes to schedules, breakdowns or materials shortages to reduce the need for face-to-face communications.
- Communicating approaches and operational procedures to suppliers, customers or trade bodies to help their adoption and to share experience.

# 8. Inbound and outbound goods/ supplies, including paper records

**Objective: To maintain social distancing and avoid surface transmission when handling paper records, post and parcels.**

**Steps to be considered where reasonably practicable:**

- Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points, procedures, signage and markings. Incorporating non-contact deliveries wherever possible
- Where Reasonably practicable consider reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others)
- Where possible and safe, having single workers load or unload vehicles
- There is no requirement to quarantine paper records or wear gloves when handling
- Staff who are processing paper patient care records should avoid touching their face and regularly wash hands or use hand sanitiser
- Considering methods to reduce frequency of deliveries, for example by ordering larger quantities less often. In supplies warehouses consider using markings and introducing one-way flow systems to prevent congestion
- Providing handwashing facilities or hand sanitiser where not possible, at entry and exit points

# Where to obtain further guidance

COVID-19: what you need to do  
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Support for businesses and employers during coronavirus (COVID-19)  
<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/business-support>

General guidance for employees during coronavirus (COVID-19)  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-and-support-for-employees-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<b>Common Areas</b>	The term 'common area' refers to areas and amenities which are provided for the common use of more than one person including canteens, reception areas, meeting rooms, areas of worship, toilets, gardens, fire escapes, kitchens, fitness facilities, store rooms, laundry facilities.
<b>Clinically extremely vulnerable</b>	Clinically extremely vulnerable people will have received a letter telling them they are in this group, or will have been told by their GP. Guidance on who is in this group can be found here: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19</a>
<b>Clinically vulnerable people</b>	Clinically vulnerable people include those aged 70 or over and those with some underlying health conditions, all members of this group are listed in the 'clinically vulnerable' section here: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing</a>