



APSE Briefing: COVID-19: New Guidance for Operators and those working in or from a Vehicle

To all APSE members in England and for information to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Key issues

- Following announcements by the Prime Minister on Sunday 10 May as to a route map out of lockdown a series of measures have now been announced to support employers who operate vehicles or whose staff work in or from them.
- This briefing therefore provides links to the latest guidance effective as of the 12 May but subject to further updates.
- It is worth noting that this guidance has been prepared by BEIS and DfT in consultation with devolved administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; this guidance should be considered alongside local public health and safety requirements and legislation in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

1. Introduction

Regardless of COVID-19 all employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk. This should be to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Therefore, given the known risks of COVID-19, workplaces cannot simply re-open without suitable assessments to ensure the health and safety of the workforce. This includes employers working with any other employers, or contractors, sharing the same workplace, so that everybody's health and safety is protected.

The guidance issued on the 11 May (updated / effective as of the 12 May 2020) suggests the following principle steps for those who operate vehicles or whose staff work in or from them; it applies to employees and self-employed, who also have a duty of care for their own health and safety.

2. General Guidance

The general guidance measures are: -

- In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.
- Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. 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 2m apart wherever possible).

- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.
- Further mitigating actions 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.
 - 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).
 - 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.

The guidance also suggests that in assessments you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19

3. Sector Specific Guidance

The recommendations in the rest of the guidance suggest you should also consider specific sector guidance, for example by trade associations or trades unions and that if you have not already done so, you should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your workplace as soon as possible and it recommends that the guidance document is used to identify any further improvements that should be made.

3.1 Social distancing in vehicles

- Avoid multiple occupancy vehicles where safe to do so.
- Vehicles should not be shared if possible.
- If it is not possible to keep a 2m distance in a vehicle, consider additional safety measures.

Steps that will usually be needed

Devising mitigation measures where workers have no alternative but to

work within 2m to minimise the risk of transmission, including:

- Clear signage to outline social distancing measures in place.
- Single person or contactless refueling where possible.
- Using physical screening, provided this does not compromise safety, for example, through reducing visibility.
- Sitting side-by-side not face-to-face and increasing ventilation where possible.
- Using a fixed pairing system if people have to work in close proximity, for example in a vehicle.
- Making sure vehicles are well-ventilated to increase the flow of air, for example, by opening a window.
- Ensure regular cleaning of vehicles, in particular, between different users.

3.2 Carrying out deliveries or collections

Steps that will usually be needed

- Scheduling to limit exposure to large crowds and rush hours where appropriate.
- Revising pick-up and drop-off collection points and procedures with signage and markings.
- Where possible and safe having single workers load or unload vehicles.
- Minimising unnecessary contact at gatehouse security, yard and warehouse. For example, non-contact deliveries where the nature of the product allows for use of electronic pre-booking.
- Maximising use of electronic paperwork where possible, and reviewing procedures to enable safe exchange of paper copies where needed, for example, required transport documents.
- Enabling drivers to access welfare facilities when required and consistent with other guidance.
- Encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles where this does not compromise their safety and existing safe working practice.

3.3 Accidents, security and other incidents

- In an emergency, for example, an accident, fire or break-in, people do not have to stay 2m apart if it would be unsafe.
- People involved in the provision of assistance to others should pay particular attention to sanitation measures immediately afterwards including washing hands

4. The guidance

This is a link to the full guidance document which runs to 29 pages and contains downloadable resources such as posters for employers.

[Working safely during COVID-19 in or from a vehicle: Guidance for employers, employees and the self-employed](#)

It should be noted that councils have already extensively planned for remobilisation, including through APSE's remobilisation working groups, and in many cases, staff have continued to operate vehicles albeit with additional safety measures. This guidance should also be read in the context of the additional and specific guidance on work within vehicles, for example parks staff using transit vehicles on site, existing guidance in refuse and recycling, for example the WISH guidance which has been regularly updated throughout the pandemic, and existing and new guidance on working in people's homes, for example repairs and maintenance teams and gas servicing. Briefings on these matters are available on the APSE COVID-19 support hub.

Further information may be found in the DfT document and Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Safer transport – DfT guidance for operators](#) [WISH-INFO-13-COVID19-and-waste-management-activities](#)

Several Councils have taken the initiative in introducing additional safety measures. These include:

- In-cab partitions
- Use of face masks

Covid-19 can last for several days on plastic surfaces, so additional washing will be a necessity for the screens, although they should provide some protection from others sneezing or coughing within the cab. The Government does not recommend the use of face masks although is beginning to suggest covering the mouth and nose during travel on public transport to reduce the possibility of the wearer spreading the disease. Some staff feel safer wearing face coverings and there appears no reason to stop them if this is the case, although it's not officially recommended to implement mask wearing as policy at this time.

5. APSE recommendations

Clearly all councils will have the safety of their workforce and service users at the heart of their decision-making processes. COVID-19 does not supersede the normal requirements for safe working and obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and other regulatory requirements. Regular Health and Safety reviews will be necessary as we discover more about Covid-19 and there is a staged return to work and schooling.

6. Further support

The APSE COVID-19 support hub was set up to ensure quick information is available on frontline services to our member councils. You can access the hub using [this link](#).

APSE has also introduced new services to support our members including a rapid response network query service, dedicated WhatsApp groups, dedicated COVID-19 briefings and online forums for remobilisation of council services. To access these services please enter your details using [this link](#).

If your council is not a member of APSE you can enquire about joining using [this link](#).

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