



COVID-19 – Guidelines for THS Employees and Field Staff

Process Owner: Adrian Hull

Document Control

Approvals

	Name	Signature	Position	Date
Prepared By	Adrian Hull		Managing Director	01/06/2020
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COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

THS Inspection Services Ltd

1 COVID-19 – Symptoms and Government Advice

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a type of coronavirus.

1. The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of a new continuous cough or a high temperature or a loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia).
2. If you develop these symptoms, however mild, or you have received a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test result, then you should immediately self-isolate stay at home for at least 7 days from when your symptoms started. If you live with others, all other household members who remain well must stay at home and not leave the house for 14 days. See the [stay at home guidance](#) and this [explanatory diagram](#) for further information.
3. You do not need to call NHS 111 to go into self-isolation. If you feel you cannot cope with your symptoms at home, or your condition gets worse, or your symptoms do not get better after 7 days, then use the [NHS 111](#) online service. If you do not have internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
4. If you have any symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19), you should arrange a test by visiting [NHS.UK](#), or contact 119 via telephone if you do not have internet access.
5. Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and water or hand sanitiser, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, before you eat or handle food, or when you get to work or arrive home.
6. Cover your mouth and nose with disposable tissues when you cough or sneeze. If you do not have a tissue, sneeze into the crook of your elbow, not into your hand. Dispose of tissues into a disposable rubbish bag and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser.
7. If you can, wear a face covering in enclosed public spaces where social distancing isn't possible and where you will come into contact with people you do not normally meet. Social distancing, hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes, remain the most important measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). Face coverings do not replace these. See the [staying safe outside your home guidance](#), and you can find guidance on [how to wear and make a cloth face covering](#).
8. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.

At the current time and based on our understanding of what is known so far, COVID-19 can make anyone seriously ill, but for some people the risk is higher. You can find more information on higher risk groups on [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk). As more information emerges, recommendations may change.

The Government has produced specific guidance relating to the following working environments:

- Construction and other outdoor work <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>
- Working in other peoples homes <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/homes>

This guidance may be updated from time to time and THS polices and procedures will be adapted accordingly. **If there is a difference between the guidance above and THS policies and procedures, you must follow the latter as we have conducted specific risk assessments based upon the nature of our work and activities.** The resulting requirements, as set out in the Risk Assessments and Method Statements, are there to protect you and your families and the households and workplaces that we visit.

2 Homeworking

For office staff, THS began a practice of homeworking prior to the introduction of the UK Lockdown in March 2020. We have decided to maintain this working method indefinitely as it has worked effectively and minimises unnecessary contact and journeys. Most meetings will be conducted via Microsoft Teams and any necessary team meetings will be held at Dissington Hall, or another local venue, as and when it is appropriate to do so. Client meetings will continue to be held by video or tele-conferencing where possible. In terms of working from home, please ensure that you:

- Follow the advice in the following 'Home working and staying healthy' poster: <https://www.ergonomics.org.uk/common/Uploaded%20files/Publications/CIEHF-Working-from-Home-Infographic.pdf>
- Avoid long spells of DSE work without rest breaks. Get up for at least 5 mins in every hour and a change position, focus and move around or stretch.
- Complete the following DSE Workstation Checklist and return it to your manager: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>
- Request any additional workstation or DSE equipment from your manager as soon as possible.
- Report any new aches or pains which may emanate from poor posture or remaining static for too long.
- Try to create a boundary between work hours and home hours ensuring that you take adequate rest and recovery breaks.
- Talk to your colleague and your manager regularly to prevent isolation.
- Go outside and get some fresh air at least once a day, take some exercise if you can, this will help your mental health and well-being.

3 Working in the field

During the Covid-19 pandemic it is important that you are thoroughly prepared for your visit to a customer's home or a working site; this means:

- Contacting the person or site you are visiting in advance
- Phone ahead to explain the precautions you will be taking and to set an expectation for the actions of others during your visit (for domestic householders you can use the COVID-19 script as a guide). This includes determining who will be present at the time of your visit and ensuring they are clear on the requirement for social distancing
- For visits to working sites, ask in advance for a copy of any specific requirements that the contractor or site health and safety representative might have
- Ensure that you have an adequate provision of PPE, hand sanitiser and a means of securely disposing of any contaminated waste before setting out on your journey
- Phone the customer or work site again, a few minutes before arrival to remind them of your visit and re-iterate any instructions
- Being prepared will also help limit your time in a property or worksite and therefore any exposure for you or the householder. Have any inspections forms ready (whether in paper or electronic format) together with any tools or additional PPE required.
- Sanitise your hands before and after your visit to each property or site
- Don't forget to undertake your standard Dynamic Risk Assessment on arrival and stay alert to other risks and hazards
- Follow the specific instructions in the Method Statement for the task that you are undertaking which has been adapted to consider new requirements under COVID-19
- PPE requirements will differ according to the task in hand, ensure you know which PPE is appropriate for the activity in question
- Avoid touching any surfaces unnecessarily
- Do not accept food or drink unless it is decanted into your own vessel
- If you are going to be on site and away from your vehicle for some time and the site does not have adequate facilities, carry a small bottle of hand sanitiser with you
- Whilst working in the field, you are responsible for your own health and safety through the actions you take and choices you make. If you are in doubt, do not complete the task and call your safety representative for advice. If householders or others are not maintaining social distancing or you have reason to believe that someone in the property or workspace may be suffering from COVID-19 symptoms, vacate the property and contact your safety representative
- These additional checks and requirement to remain vigilant take effort. It is up to you to follow the advice and maintain a level of diligence to protect you and others. Advice is only a phone call away

4 THS Pre-Visit Script – Suggested Guidance

We need to ensure that we are prepared for our visit, but we also need to ensure that the householder is also prepared. We need to sensitively extract the correct information from a householder in a pre-visit call to ensure that we manage our risks accordingly to protect them and ourselves. Current Government advice does not prevent those who need to work in other peoples' homes from doing so as long as proper precautions are taken, householders may be wary of admitting non-household members into their property for some time. The pre-visit call is also an opportunity to explain the nature of the visit and re-assure any occupants who may have concerns.

When you first call to make the appointment, make sure that you:

- Fully explain the purpose of the visit to the householder
- Determine whether anyone in the property is currently suffering from symptoms or is isolating, having had symptoms in the last 14 days (if they are, explain that you will call back and agree a date to do so, please record such instances and report the, to the office)
- Determine if anyone in the household is currently shielding or in a very high-risk vulnerable group
- If in doubt as to whether you should undertake the visit, tell them that you are going to seek advice and contact a member of the Management Team
- Explain what you will do during your visit, how much time you will spend inside and outside the property, where you will need to access, exactly what you will be doing
- Explain what PPE you will be wearing and ask them
- Ask them to keep any children or pets in a separate space
- Explain to them that you will be practising social distancing and that you will expect them to do the same
- Allow them the opportunity to ask questions, ask them if they have any concerns
- Do not force them to accept a visit if they are hesitant or have any concerns
- Be prepared to offer them the office phone number for any further reassurance
- Give them the opportunity to cancel if they change their minds or their circumstances change, leave a contact number.

5 RIDDOR Reporting and COVID-19

THS has adapted its **Accident, Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure** in line with the new guidance from the HSE in relation to reporting exposure to notifiable diseases and biological agents. Please follow this procedure

There is no requirement under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) to report incidents of disease or deaths of members of the public, patients, care home residents or service users from COVID-19.

The reporting requirements relating to cases of, or deaths from, COVID-19 under RIDDOR apply only to occupational exposure, that is, as a result of a person's work.

RIDDOR reporting of COVID-19

You must only make a report under RIDDOR (The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) when:

- An unintended incident at work has led to someone's possible or actual exposure to coronavirus. This must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
- A worker has been diagnosed as having COVID 19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was caused by exposure at work. This must be reported as a case of disease.
- A worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.

What to report

Dangerous occurrences

Read about RIDDOR regulation 7, Schedule 2 – Section 10 on [legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1471/schedule/2/made>

If something happens at work which results in (or could result in) the release or escape of coronavirus you must report this as a dangerous occurrence. An example of a dangerous occurrence would be a lab worker accidentally smashing a glass vial containing coronavirus, leading to people being exposed.

Cases of disease: exposure to a biological agent

Read about RIDDOR regulation 9 (b) on [legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1471/regulation/9/made>

If there is reasonable evidence that someone diagnosed with COVID-19 was likely exposed because of their work, you must report this as an exposure to a biological agent using the case of disease report. An example of a work-related exposure to coronavirus would be a health care professional who is diagnosed with COVID-19 after treating patients with COVID-19.

Work related fatalities

Read about RIDDOR regulation 6 (2) on [legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/1471/regulation/6/made>

If a worker dies as a result of exposure to coronavirus from their work and this is confirmed as the likely cause of death by a registered medical practitioner, then you must report this as a death due to exposure to a biological agent using the 'case of disease' report form. You must report workplace

fatalities to HSE by the quickest practicable means without delay and send a report of that fatality within 10 days of the incident.

Find out more about what you must report.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/reportable-incidents.htm>

Who will report this?

In all instances, follow the THS Accident, Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure and please immediately contact your Health and Safety Representative: **Adrian Hull**

He is responsible for reporting all RIDDOR reportable instances to the HSE.