



GIS RISK ADVISORY NOTICE 16: RISK ASSESSMENT FOR COVID-19

The Department of Business Enterprise and Employment (DBEI) issued the **Return to Work Safely Protocol COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers** which sets out how an organisation should safely return to the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 is a risk that will continue to be part of our working life for some time and Delegated State Authorities (DSAs) must incorporate these new arrangements into their workplaces' health and safety management systems. The State Claims Agency (SCA) has developed a COVID-19 biological agents risk assessment for DSAs to be included with existing risk assessments.

Scope

The purpose of this risk advisory notice (RAN) is to assist DSAs in completing a biological agents risk assessment to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 infection in the workplace.

There is a common law and statutory duty on DSAs to complete an appropriate biological agents risk assessment where the nature of the work poses an occupational exposure health risk to COVID-19. This requirement is set out in the **Return to Work Safely Protocol** and is supported by the guiding templates developed by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). By completing this risk assessment, DSAs can also help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace, protect their employees from being infected and prevent the possibility of claims arising in the future.

How to use the risk assessment template

It is expected that all DSAs are applying advices set out in the national guidelines and that appropriate risk control measures are being actively implemented. These control measures must be documented in a biological agent risk assessment.

The biological agents risk assessment for COVID-19 (Appendix A) sets out the typical risks / hazards which may arise in the workplace from COVID-19. It is a non-exhaustive list and is not likely to cover all scenarios, therefore, it is provided in editable format to allow DSAs to consider site-specific factors and incorporate these into their existing risk assessments and amend as appropriate.

To complete Appendix A, DSAs should:

1. Review the recommended controls as listed under "Controls / Action" and for each location:
 - a. Remove the control measures which do not apply and/or;
 - b. Reconfigure the control measures to reflect actions which have been implemented within your DSA;
2. Include "Site-specific controls" that have been applied within your DSA;
3. Record the "Date Completed" and "Completed By" sections to track and close all control measures;
4. Communicate control measures to employees and others as appropriate;
5. Include a copy of the completed risk assessment as an insert within your safety statement documentation;
6. Review and update in line with COVID-19 advices and retain all documentation on file.

How often should the biological agents risk assessment be reviewed?

Given the volatile nature of COVID-19, risk assessments will require regular review and should be updated based on current best practice on infection prevention and control as advised by public health.

DSAs should also review other relevant occupational health and safety risk assessments to take account of any changes that may arise to business activities following the implementation of public health recommendations.

This risk advisory notice has been produced solely for use by DSAs that come within the remit of the State Claims Agency, as established by the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2000. The State Claims Agency does not bear responsibility for use of the guidance or reliance on it in any manner by any other third party.

Appendix A - COVID-19 Risk Assessment – Part 1. General Requirements

| Hazard / Risk | Hazard / Risk Present? | Controls / Actions | Control Complete | Date Completed | Completed By |
|--|---|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Risk of transmission of infection from inadequate physical distancing | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote working is facilitated, where possible. A remote working policy is in place and ICT infrastructure / facilities to support working from home is provided; Staff who are at higher risk, as outlined in the HSE At-Risk Groups, have been identified and continue to work from home; Number of individuals (staff, volunteers, service providers/users, visitors) allowed in the workplace / location is restricted; Staff off-site visits to external locations are avoided, where possible. Guidance is provided to those who conduct site visits in third-party locations; Physical distancing measures, where individuals shall be present, have been implemented; Where physical distancing cannot be ensured by organisational means, alternative protective measures are in place. | | | |
| Inadequate supply of hygiene controls | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient hand washing and hand sanitising facilities have been provided in convenient locations that can be easily and frequently accessed. Stations, as appropriate, are available for anyone involved in outdoor activities and / or personal hand sanitisers are provided; A monitoring system is in place to ensure that stations are regularly checked and replenished; Hand sanitisers are provided to staff who work off-site; Tissues for coughing and sneezing are available throughout the workplace. | | | |
| Inadequate supply of PPE | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate supplies of suitable PPE for required tasks are provided; Additional PPE (enclosed eye protection and FFP2 mask, if available) is provided and must be worn by First Aid Responders when responding to all first aid incidents where close contact cannot be avoided. A mask is available to give a person if she/he is displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19 to limit droplet dispersion; Staff have been provided with any necessary PPE to perform cleaning / disinfection tasks; Individuals are informed that prior to donning PPE, and on their removal, they should wash / sanitise their hands thoroughly; Arrangements are in place for the monitoring, cleaning, inspection, maintenance and disposal of PPE, where appropriate; Where the use of PPE is required, staff have been trained in the correct fitting, use, removal, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE. | | | |
| Inadequate level of communication | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff who are returning to the workplace are provided with a training programme which includes information as outlined in <i>the HSA Employer Checklist Number 3: induction / familiarisation</i>; | | | |

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| <p>to all relevant individuals</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff complete the online COVID-19 return to work form; • Posters, notices and signs are displayed in prominent places outlining: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the signs and symptoms of COVID-19; ○ the procedure to follow if they or a colleague develops symptoms of COVID-19 while in the workplace / location; ○ control measures which should be followed – social distancing, hand and respiratory hygiene, and minimising contact; ○ hand washing instructions. • A lead worker representative has been appointed and provided with the necessary information to complete their role; • Agreed lines of communication are implemented with the lead worker representative, including how staff raise any concerns, report any incidents and feedback on controls measures while also providing them with relevant up-to-date information e.g. changing control measures, national advices etc.; • A system is implemented to keep up-to-date with updated national and international guidelines. | | | |
| <p>Site-specific Controls:</p> | | | | | |
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COVID-19 Risk Assessment - Part 2. Surfaces & Cleaning

| Hazard / Risk | Hazard / Risk Present? | Controls / Actions | Control Complete | Date Completed | Completed By |
|--|---|---|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Risk of transmission of infection from frequently touched surfaces | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas and surfaces which are frequency touched are identified; The number of touch surfaces have been reduced; Work practices are organised to reduce the flow of individuals around the workplace; The sharing of items, such as cups, bottles, is avoided and workspaces, electronics etc are allocated for individual use; Staff are informed to clean any personal items they have brought to work and to avoid leaving them down on communal surfaces. Storage areas are provided where possible; Ventilation is improved by opening doors and windows where it does not conflict with fire safety arrangements. This also reduces contact with door and window handles. | | | |
| Risk of transmission of infection from surfaces due to lack of cleaning | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cleaning procedure is developed which includes the item, frequency, type / level, products / PPE required and who completes the tasks. This information is communicated to all relevant staff; The cleaning procedure also outlines the procedure for cleaning an area where a person with possible or confirmed COVID-19 has been; Safety data sheets and risk assessment are available for each chemical product and information on use communicated; Disposable cleaning equipment is used where possible. Staff ensure that reusable equipment (mops etc) is clean prior to use; Frequently touched surfaces are visibly clean at all times, are cleaned at least twice daily and records maintained; Washrooms and surfaces in communal areas are cleaned at least twice daily and when visibly dirty. Washroom facilities are disinfected in addition to cleaning. Records are maintained on site; Staff are provided with essential cleaning materials to keep their own workspace clean. Consider use of covers which can be wiped for electronics; Communal areas have been reviewed and any non-essential items such as magazines, newspapers, leaflets removed; Number of waste collection points are increased and these are emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day; A monitoring system for checking on supplies is implemented including but not limited to: disinfectant wipes, disinfection products, paper towels, waste bins, bags, PPE relevant to the workplace and activities. | | | |

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| Risk of transmission of infection from traveling in DSA vehicles | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff travel in their own vehicles where possible. Where shared vehicles are necessary additional protective measures are implemented e.g. face covering, increase ventilation etc; • The use of a protective screen or barrier between the driver and service user is determined by a risk assessment e.g. perspex screens or strong clear plastic sheets. Consideration is given to the safety of both the driver and service user and to the placement of such screens in order to ensure that the effective operation of safety equipment such as airbags is not hindered; • Vehicles are cleaned between use; • A simple user checklist for vehicle usage which includes a list of surfaces which require cleaning such as the steering wheel, gear stick, handbrake, door handles, seats and the backs of seats and headrests is provided. Individuals pay close attention to all surfaces that are touched often by drivers and passengers; • Lidded bins are provided in each vehicle in addition to sufficient cleaning materials. | | | |
| Site-specific Controls: | | | | | |
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COVID-19 Risk Assessment – Part 3. Contact Risk

| Hazard/Risk | Hazard /Risk Present? | Controls/Actions | Control Complete | Date Completed | Completed By |
|--|---|--|------------------|----------------|--------------|
| Risk of transmission of infection from contact -contractors, visitors, etc. | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where business critical service providers / service users / visitors are required to attend the workplace, a controlled access process is implemented which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an approval process for attendance; ○ completion of the visitor /contractor COVID-19 questionnaire; ○ provision of information relating to control measures. • The control of contractors policy and code of conduct are reviewed and take into consideration any additional control measures and instructions. | | | |
| Risk of transmission of infection from suspected case | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An isolation area and route to the area is identified and is accessible to people with disabilities. Staff are aware of the location; • The following is made available at the isolation area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ventilation, e.g. fresh air ventilation / ability to open a window ○ tissues ○ hand sanitiser ○ disinfectant and/or wipes ○ gloves, masks ○ waste bags ○ pedal-operated, closed bin • A trained response team e.g. manager, lead worker representative, first responders, cleaning staff have been identified and trained in their roles for managing a suspected case; • All contact lists are up-to-date; • A procedure / checklist for managing suspect case is in place; • All staff/volunteers/service providers/service users/visitors know procedure for logging attendance i.e. COVID-19 contact log; • Staff, volunteers and visitors are encouraged to use the COVID-19 tracker app; • All confirmed cases of COVID-19 are reported to the SCA in line with their guidance. | | | |
| Site Specific Controls: | | | | | |
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Appendix B- Examples

Please see below a non-exhaustive list of examples for a number of control measures which are outlined above

| Part 1. | General Requirements |
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| Risk of transmission of infection from inadequate social and physical distancing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the following for restricting/reducing the number of individuals (staff, volunteers, service providers/users, visitors) in the workplace/location): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contactless delivery options such as designated drop-off times and location e.g. box at door for post; Where possible virtual meetings should be facilitated, even between colleagues physically located within the building; Essential face-to-face meetings (with, colleagues, service users etc.) should be restricted and limited in length; Use of technological alternatives e.g. emailing electronic forms instead of posting; Restricting number of visitors and / or restricting access to certain indoor locations; Staggered start times / shifts to reduce the number of staff present and congestion at entrance points; Complete virtual training, where possible. Where individuals are returning to work, the following physical distancing examples could be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where essential face-to-face meetings are required, the meeting space should be set up to accommodate physical distancing e.g. indicating capacity, floor markings to indicate sitting arrangements; Workspaces, canteens, training rooms etc. should be set up and sign posted to accommodate physical distancing and ventilation increased; Implement a queue management system with correct distance markings e.g. lifts, entrance/exits, counters; Provide one-way systems for access / egress routes, corridors, walkways; Use of floor markings as reminders to maintain social distance e.g. in lifts, posters / signposts located on outside pathways; ceasing all self-service activities and providing food that is pre-wrapped; Staggering breaks into teams who work together. |
| Inadequate supply of hygiene controls | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Entry /exits, close to work areas, receptions, canteens, restrooms, lifts, photocopiers, are examples of high traffic / communal areas where hand sanitising facilities could be located. |
| Part 2. | Surface & Cleaning |
| Risk of transmission of infection from frequently touched surfaces | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples of surfaces which are frequency touched include tables, chairs, lifts buttons, photocopiers, printers, tabs, toilets, remotes controls / TV switches, electronics, kettles, coffee machine, fridge doors, door handles, light switches, tools, inside vehicles etc; In order to reduce the number of surfaces which individuals could touch provide pedal / no-touch bins, leaving internal doors open, removing unnecessary items (spare chairs, storage boxes, etc) from work areas, contactless photocopiers / printers, allocate individual workspaces, pre-wrapped food items etc. |
| Risk of transmission of infection from surfaces due to lack of cleaning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider providing staff with wipes / disinfection products, paper towels and waste bins / bags to keep their own workspace clean; Consider use of covers which can be wiped for electronics. |
| Risk of transmission of infection from traveling in DSA vehicles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please refer to the National Transport Authority advisory guidelines on Temporary COVID-19 Dividing Screens for specific requirements on the installation of a protective screen between drivers and passengers. |

Appendix C - Source/Reference Material

| Topic | Title | Author/Source |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| All | Return to Work Safely Protocol, COVID - 19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers | Government of Ireland |
| All | Government of Ireland | Government of Ireland |
| All | Health Service Executive | Health Service Executive |
| All | Health Protection Surveillance Centre | Health Protection Surveillance Centre Health Service Executive |
| All | Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation | Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation |
| All | Health and Safety Authority | Health and Safety Authority |
| Schools | Department of Education and Skills | Department of Education and Skills |
| All | COVID-19 - Advice for Employers and Employees | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | COVID-19 - Return to Work Safely Templates and Checklists | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | HSE at risk groups | Health Service Executive |
| All | Checklist 1: Planning and Preparing | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 2: Control Measures to Prevent Infection | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 3: COVID-19 Induction | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 4: Dealing with a Suspected Case of COVID-19 | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 5: Cleaning and Disinfection | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 6: Workers | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Checklist 7: Worker Representative(s) Checklist | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | Role of Lead Worker Representative(s) poster | Health and Safety Authority |
| All | National Interim Guidelines for Public Health management of contacts of cases of COVID-19 | Health Protection Surveillance Centre Health Service Executive |
| All | Coronavirus (COVID-19) posters and resources | Health Service Executive |
| All | Minding your mental health during the coronavirus pandemic | Health Service Executive |
| All | Work Positive ^{CI} | State Claims Agency / Health and Safety Authority / CISM Network Ireland |
| All | GIS Risk Advisory Notice 15: Covid-19 Building Reoccupation Risk Assessment | State Claims Agency |
| All | Risk Advisory Notice: COVID-19 (Coronavirus)* | State Claims Agency |
| All | Indemnity Advices: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) | State Claims Agency |
| All | Reporting adverse events or incidents to SCA | State Claims Agency |
| All | GIS Risk Advisory Notice 12: A Guide to Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) | State Claims Agency |
| All | Inspection and Testing of Equipment and Machinery - Regulatory Requirements | State Claims Agency |
| All | GIS Risk Advisory Notice 15: Covid-19 Building Reoccupation Risk Assessment | State Claims Agency |
| First aid | PHECC COVID-19 Advisory v1 | Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) |
| Cleaning | Disinfection of environments in healthcare and non-healthcare settings potentially contaminated with SARS-CoV-2 | European Centre for disease control |
| Equipment/tools & visitors | Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic Standard Operating Procedures | Construction Industry Federation |
| Business Continuity | COVID-19 Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide | National Standards Authority of Ireland |