

# Returning to the workplace 2020

A preparation guidance document for  
Property Owners, Managers and Occupiers  
returning to the workplace, post COVID-19  
outbreak



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## RETURNING TO WORK

As things begin to stabilize from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, stay-at-home restrictions will most likely be lifted and organizations will begin to bring workers back into the physical workplace.

AT RM, we know that the migration of a work from home or furloughed workforce back to their places of business will look different for every organization and we are here to assist our clients where necessary to facilitate the transition.

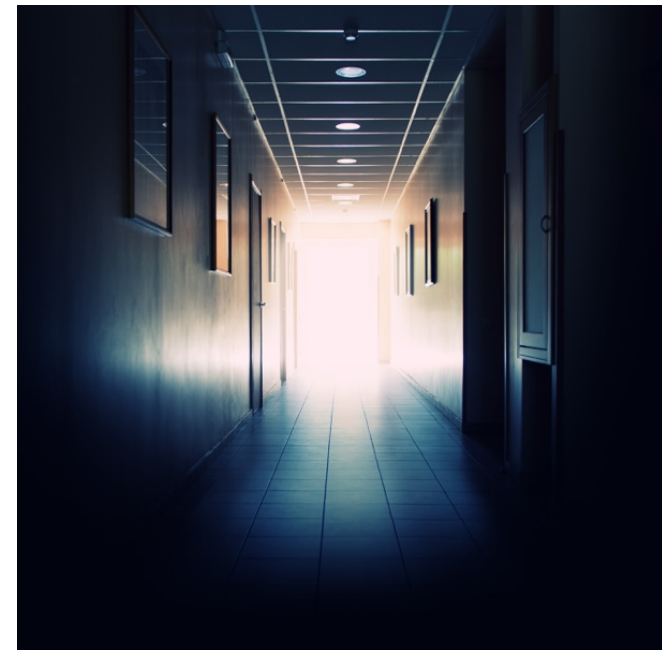
Within this guide document for re-opening a workplace, we suggest some effective ways to prepare buildings and receive workforces in as safe and effective way as possible.

### KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR OWNERS & OCCUPIERS:

- **Building:** pre-return inspections, cleaning regime, HVAC & mechanicals checks
- **Staff:** policies for employee communications
- **Access:** protocols for health and safety checks, building reception, visitor policy, shipping and receiving, elevators.
- **Social Distancing:** lowering density, schedule management, human traffic patterns
- **Touch Points and Cleaning:** open doors (non-fire doors), clean desk policy, food plan, cleaning common areas
- **Communication:** communicate transparently, listen and assess regularly.

### Important Notes:

- I. The World Health Organization (WHO), as well as Public Health England are the primary sources for guidance on COVID-19 and other health-related issues.
- II. This resource has been created to both stimulate ideas and to facilitate in the creation of recommendations that can be used by owners & occupiers to build a healthy and safe environment post COVID-19 outbreak, 2020.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Below we provide guidance **for landlords and occupiers on how they can work together** to achieve best results:

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

The health and safety of the people who use the building should be treated as a shared responsibility. All property stakeholders should take responsibility and work toward collectively improving the physical environment for the benefit of all building users.

Certain topics for collaboration in relation to health and safety are highlighted in the checklist below.

#### Health and Safety Checklist:

- 1) Policies and Plans for use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) on site
- 2) Implementation of new social distancing measures
- 3) Signage to maintain safe distances
- 4) Capacity monitoring for lifts and toilets

### COMMUNICATION

Communication of new policies and plans between Landlord, Property Manager and Tenant is key to accompany an effective roll-out of new measures.

Certain topics for collaboration in relation to communication are highlighted in the checklist below.

#### Communication Checklist:

- 1) Workforce communication before and during employees return to work
- 2) Responsibilities for each stakeholder in the communicating of safety measures and protocols that have been implemented
- 3) Communication protocols and plans should escalated control measures be required in the future



## PRE-RETURN CHECKS

Landlords, Property Managers and Occupiers should make sure that their properties are assessed and checked before their workforce returns. Below are some recommendations as to what these pre-return checks could be:

### WORKER SAFETY

Workers prepping a building for return of workforce should:

- 1) Be made aware of requirements for hand washing and social distancing
- 2) Wear appropriate PPE (such as masks, gloves, eye protection and coveralls)
- 3) Receive training in the fitting, wearing and use of PPE as well as safe removal, sanitisation and disposal
- 4) Train first aiders to include the use of the following in their first aid:
  - Disposable FFP3 face masks
  - Disposable latex or nitrile gloves
  - Disposable plastic apron
  - Plastic visor or eye protection that has been thoroughly cleaned and sanitised before and after each use.

## CLEANING & DISINFECTING

Building Managers and Contractors should:

- 1) Review site cleaning chemicals and consumables to ensure inventory levels are suitable
- 2) Ensure cleaning equipment and tools are in good working condition
- 3) Be trained on proper disinfecting guidelines
- 4) Determine areas that require thorough cleaning due to heavy usage
- 5) Ensure all staff practice hand hygiene, washing hands thoroughly prior to putting PPE on
- 6) Treat all surfaces using government approved disinfectants
- 7) Properly dispose of or sanitize PPE in accordance with WHO or Public Health England regulatory requirements.



## BUILDING INSPECTION

Property Managers should check the following before returning to work:

- 1) Mechanical Systems
- 2) Water Systems
- 3) Fire Life Safety Systems
- 4) That the following items have all been cleaned and filters changed where necessary: Air cooled systems, Fan systems, Air cooled Chillers, Water cooled chillers

## PANDEMIC RECOVERY PLAN

Each organization should develop a recovery plan to address responses to pandemics. Items for consideration include:

- 1) Creating an emergency team
- 2) Establishing procedures for alert and outbreak verification
- 3) Establishing information flows
- 4) Communication strategies for all stakeholders

## PREPARING THE WORKPLACE

In preparation for the return of the workforce to the workplace, **employers should consider utilising pre-return checks, tasks and assignments.**

## CLEANING & DISINFECTING

Below we have outlined some areas to consider:

- 1) Clean and sanitize surfaces
- 2) Flush Toilets
- 3) Provide adequate stock of hand sanitizer & disinfectant wipes
- 4) Provide tissues, no-touch waste bins, hand Soap, alcohol-based hand sanitizer and wipes, disinfectants, and disposable towels
- 5) Introduce advanced cleaning and disinfection standards, such as routine cleaning and disinfecting of high-touch spaces and surfaces as per Public Health England or WHO guidelines
- 6) Review and prepare plans for changes to cleaning scope or any additional services
- 7) Affix signage in workspace and common areas promoting worker safety through emphasizing basic infection prevention measures
- 8) Obtain an adequate supply of PPE for staff

- 9) Introduce contaminant control measures such as separate bins for PPE, a disinfecting/UV room for deliveries, areas where staff can store their personal belongings in their own space such as lockers.

## SOCIAL DISTANCING

Social distancing solutions can be used to reduce transmission of contagious diseases among colleagues.

N.B Applicable laws such as UK Workplace Regulations must not be compromised to achieve social distancing.



Consider the following range of precautions and social distancing measures:

#### **Spacing**

- 1) Space use and density monitoring of staff to ensure spacing to 2 metres apart.
- 2) Conduct regular counts of occupants per floor

#### **Circulation**

- 1) Designate and signpost the direction of foot-traffic in corridors, stairs & entrances
- 2) Consider one-way circulation routes through the

workplace

- 3) Mark increments of locally acceptable social distance on floors where queues could form

#### **Seating**

- 1) Use alternate desks
- 2) Add desks to spaces previously used for group activities (convert training/meeting rooms, café areas into desk working areas)
- 3) Increase space between desks

#### **Shared spaces**

- 1) Re-purpose large gathering spaces as office space, to facilitate social distancing
- 2) Space chairs accordingly in meeting rooms
- 3) Prohibit shared use of small rooms by groups and convert to single occupant use only
- 4) Calculate the maximum capacity of each room

Before your workforce returns, check that:

- 1) All building inspections are complete
- 2) Any required remediation is complete
- 3) A communication plan is developed to explain measures that have been taken to safeguard the occupants.



## FIRST DAY BACK & MOVING FORWARD

### **Reception Areas:**

Consider guidelines and recommendations to control building ingress and egress. These might include:

#### **Entrances:**

- Direct occupants to use monitored and protected routes whilst adhering to applicable laws such as UK Workplace Regulations
- Hand sanitizer provided at doorways
- Floor markings for safe distancing for any queues or waiting areas

#### **Reception:**

- Train receptionists on safe interactions with visitors
- Reconfigure visitor registration systems to avoid guests leaning over receptionists
- Glass screens between guests and reception personnel
- Disable Registration touchscreens or arrange for disinfection after each use
- Disposable ID tags rather than reusable lanyards
- Remove unnecessary reception furniture to reduce public touchpoints
- Provide PPE to visitors

#### **Signage:**

- Install signage
- Explain building rules on how visitors and occupants use and move throughout the building

#### **PPE:**

- Provide bins for used PPE
- Develop new protocols for collecting and disposing of PPE waste

#### **Cleaning:**

- Monitor and review of existing cleaning guidelines and adjust for entrance as required

### **Shipping and receiving areas:**

Building managers should review current processes for inbound and outbound deliveries (parcels, mail, food deliveries, couriers).

#### **New guidelines might include:**

- Delivery instructions that will minimize contact with the larger building population
- Separating shipping and receiving areas from the general population
- Require staff handling mail and parcels to wear PPE
- Sanitise packaging before distribution

### **Lobbies and Common Parts:**

Consider the following protocol to improve safety and sanitization in lobbies and common parts:

- Hand sanitiser provided in multiple locations around the property
- Signage or floor markings to direct occupants and ensure social distancing
- Clearly signpost queuing areas
- Re-arrange furniture to promote social distancing in communal spaces
- Offer pre-packaged foods only in canteens
- Reduce self-service access to foods
- Clearly signpost queuing areas
- Monitor and review of existing cleaning guidelines and adjust as required

### **Lifts:**

Building Managers should consider the following protocol to improve safety in lifts:

- Social distancing queue management for waiting passengers
- Instructional signage displaying lift use protocols including passenger limits
- Review of lift cleaning processes to ensure that high touch rate areas such as buttons are cleaned regularly.

### **General Staff Guidance Notes:**

- The use of public transport to access the office could be avoided, where possible
- Non-essential meetings, visitors or travelling between offices could be avoided
- Staggered start and finish times could help to avoid peaks in accessing/leaving the office
- Flexibility to enable staff to continue to work remotely for all or part of their day may be an option to reduce density on site
- Staff can be encouraged to bring lunch, cups, plates etc from home to minimise cross contamination.

*Transparency, ongoing communication, awareness and creating a culture of trust and empathy will be crucial to facilitate a successful transition back to work.*



**are currently helping clients get back to work, by conducting pre-return H&S Checklists, affixing social distancing and hygiene signage to properties across the country - in one visit.**

**If you are interested in learning more about this service, please email [support@rmriskmanagement.com](mailto:support@rmriskmanagement.com) or call 01212360642.**