# Assurity
## Consulting
### Independent workplace compliance

# 36 ways to help give your health, safety and environmental compliance 20-20 vision in 2020

## Issue 3 - March 2020

# 36 ways to help give your health, safety and environmental compliance 20-20 vision in 2020.

With COVID-19 high on the agenda currently we have looked at some of the issues around the outbreak and the effects this could have on your health and safety management.

The concept remains for you to consider areas of your management by investing 10-15 minutes of your time to challenge your processes and procedures.

So again, we have asked three questions for you to investigate and identify whether you are meeting the level of compliance you are expecting. Some months may involve simply reviewing documents, others to go and look at items or challenge processes.

Deliberations for March are:

1.  **How might a reduction in staff change your building management?**
2.  **How are you going to implement your Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and/or keep your assessment of risk up to date?**
3.  **What about home/remote/different working?**

## 1.     How might a reduction in staff change your building management?

If the UK implements it's contain strategy fully you could see your building operating with a decreased level of occupancy. Not only might this directly affect the staff you have to maintain and manage the building, but you may also need to modify your activities on other systems and services.

Look at what works activity you have planned in for the coming weeks and draw up a plan prioritising those that are essential and must be done versus those that could be delayed in the short term.

Other points to consider:

- If you have specific projects with outside contractors, how are they equipped to deal with possible staff shortages or deliveries of items etc. particularly if restrictions on travel occur?

- How might the provision of catering or other services be affected?

- If areas of the building are unoccupied, will this affect processes such as infrequently used outlet flushing, so how will you identify and accommodate this?

- How might your provision of fire wardens and first aiders be affected?

- Compliance checks become even more important at these times as it is often the unusual circumstances that uncover/identify/magnify where issues are or could occur. Keeping these as scheduled will mean that you have the processes in place to maintain your compliance management as the building re-populates.

- Check your technology. If you are going to have an increasing number of people working away from the office, it is not just the infrastructure that needs to work. Make sure security software is updated and people know the right procedures and protocols for accessing your systems remotely. COVID-19 may not be the only virus to manage otherwise!!

**2.      How are you going to implement your Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and/or keep your assessment of risk up to date?**

If your organisational business continuity plan is implemented, specifically what areas will be covered by workplace and facilities management?

If a case or suspected case of COVID-19 is identified this will impact cleaning and logistics. So, knowing what is needed will be essential to supporting the business.

If you haven't been involved in the BCP process, then make sure you get access to the specific elements of the plan that facilities and/or health and safety are responsible for and what the deliverables are.

Where outside support is needed check the arrangements and terms and conditions as it may not only be you looking to get these services in place.

Keep informed and up to date with any changes.

If you have implemented additional safety control measures in the last few weeks in order to reduce the likelihood of your building occupants coming into contact with COVID-19? If so, then the control you've implemented and why you've done them should be documented in a risk assessment.

In this instance, the hazard is the virus (has the potential to cause harm) and the risk is an individual(s) contracting COVID-19. The safety control measures are the additional measures that you have been implementing.

As with any risk assessment, keep it under review as situations change. Update the risk assessment as required and document the review and any changes. Communicate the risks to relevant parties, which you have probably already done by communicating your additional safety control measures to your building occupants.

Producing and keeping the document up to date also provides you with chronology of your reasoning for the activities carried out.

## 3. What about home/remote/different working?

Organisations are adopting a range of strategies to manage the impact of COVID-19. Most currently are maintaining a "business as usual" approach, while risk assessing options for if and when a case/suspected case of the virus is detected in the workforce, maintaining business operations and/or dealing with potential high numbers of absentees – should those falling ill or needing to self-isolate increase dramatically.

Some organisations are already profiling their staff and considering how they manage different populations i.e. those most vulnerable (older members of staff and/or those with related illnesses), specialist teams, project teams or groups dealing with business-critical functions. We have heard of:

• Teams being split and working on rotas;
• Some people being targeted to work at home;
• Multiple locations being set up and used, but people being restricted to working in just one of them;
• Buildings or parts of them being vacated; or
• Departments being "isolated".

The procedures put in place will of course depend on your organisation and current circumstances. Making sure the communication is right is key though – we have had three updates to the COVID-19 employee guidance we provide our employees already!

All the options will have knock on effects for facilities and health and safety, but some more than others. For example:

1. If working at different, and possibly new locations, and having staff numbers down, how are your fire and first aid provisions impacted? What are you doing to offset and manage these?

2. The implications of asking vulnerable staff to stay at home indefinitely if a case or suspected case of COVID-19 is detected. This could be seen as a change where they are now considered a "home worker". If this is the case the health and safety requirements for them will be different to someone who is not required to but chooses to work from home.

3. Many industry sectors and bodies are providing tailored information to their members and potential specific risks they may encounter. Such information can help and inform your processes and procedures.

4. If you are choosing to implement a segregation or isolation policy for parts of your premises, what are the effects on catering, cleaning, egress and accessing services?

5. Keeping staff informed will be very important particularly if and when the "delay" phase is formally introduced in the UK. Bearing in mind the recently passed The Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020, this Statutory Instrument (2020 No.129) came into force on the 10th February 2020. These Regulations apply where the Secretary of State declares "that the incidence or transmission of Coronavirus constitutes a serious and imminent threat to public health" and cover topics including:

   • Detention of persons by the Secretary of State or a registered public health consultant;
   • Imposition of restrictions and requirements;
   • Screening requirements;
   • Imposition of further restrictions and requirements;
   • Isolation of persons suspected to be infected with Coronavirus;
   • Detention or isolation: additional provisions; and
   • Restrictions or requirements: groups.