



Independent workplace compliance



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

Issue 12 - December 2020



Christmas COVID-19 Secure

As we near the end of the year and thoughts turn to a tiered Christmas, we still need to be maintaining COVID-19 Secure, as well as our statutory compliance.

Below are three questions with a festive twist for you to consider by investing 15 minutes of your time to review your processes and procedures. In addition to the questions supporting information is provided for you on each of the topic areas.

1. **Christmas and COVID-19 Secure, what are the changes and considerations?**
2. **How has travel been affected by the Christmas changes?**
3. **What is the HSE advice on COVID-19 Secure over the festive period?**

Season's greetings from
Assurity Consulting,
leading experts in all areas of
workplace health, safety and
environmental compliance.



1. Christmas and COVID-19 Secure, what are the changes and considerations?

While from 23rd-27th December 2020, limited changes are being made to household restrictions and social contact, it is not the same for workplaces where existing COVID-19 Secure requirements will still apply.

This means that despite the “Christmas Bubble” arrangements for private homes, workplaces must continue to follow the guidance for the tier applicable to your area. As we have seen this week in London and other parts of the South East, tiers could also change over this time too and this will still need to be considered.

Gov.UK is also providing the following advice:

“Going to work - If you are working during this period, you should continue to do so from home where you can do so.”

“Going to school, college and university - You should continue to attend your school or college until the last day of normal term time. Schools and colleges should not change their Christmas holidays or close early this term. Parents should continue to send their children to school during term time and students should continue to attend college right up until the end of term – our senior clinicians continue to advise that the best place for children and young people is in education. The time-limited change to social restrictions over Christmas does not require any children to be taken out of school prematurely.”

The Government Winter Plan, published in November 2020 also, remains in place and advises:

“The Government encourages employers to enable a greater degree of home working and will strengthen guidance to be very clear that anyone who can work from home should do so. The Government recognises that there are specific reasons why attendance in the workplace may be needed, including mental health issues or concerns; and / or a need to work on-site physically. In industries and sectors where working from home is not possible, including, for example, in much of the construction and manufacturing sectors, and where people’s jobs necessitate working in other people’s homes, businesses have taken clear steps to protect the health and safety of staff and customers through following Government guidance, making their workplaces COVID-Secure, enabling staff to observe hands, face, space and adopting behaviours that will reduce transmission. In circumstances such as these, people should continue going to work.”



Activities you should consider over the Christmas period:

- Review your provision for fire wardens and first aiders as with many people taking holiday, it may need adjusting to continue to provide the necessary cover.
- Be aware of possible changes to the tier system for your area and how this could affect your organisation. What needs to be done/communicated to meet any changes in requirements?
- Review your COVID-19 Secure arrangements and adjust any controls/procedures as needed. Consider also any changes to occupancy for your workplace in the post-Christmas period and how these could affect your controls.
- Check your water management, particularly any infrequently used outlets and how these may be affected by the Christmas holidays, adjust your controls as needed.

Useful links

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period>

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/937529/COVID-19_Winter_Plan.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>



2. How has travel been affected by the Christmas changes?

As with changes to gatherings, travel over the Christmas period has also been revised. But this is primarily for non-work-related travel. For work purposes you can continue to travel, but must reflect the advice for the tier you are in.

In all cases it should be remembered that, "You must not travel if you are experiencing any coronavirus symptoms, are self-isolating as a result of coronavirus symptoms, are sharing a household or support bubble with somebody with symptoms, or have been told to self-isolate after being contacted by NHS Test and Trace."

Government information also recognises transport routes may be busier than normal and provides the following advice:

- Plan ahead, check for disruption before you leave, and avoid the busiest routes, as well as busy times;
- Avoid making unnecessary stops during your journey;
- Avoid sharing a car with people not in your household or Christmas bubble;
- Keep your distance from other people when you travel, where possible;
- Wash or sanitise your hands regularly; and
- Wear a face covering on public transport in England unless you're exempt.

If you are going to travel to Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland, you should read the guidance relevant to each of these jurisdictions before you travel.

The rules on international travel between 23rd-27th December 2020, do not change. From the 2nd December 2020 you have been able to travel abroad (including to visit friends and family) subject to any restrictions in place at your destination. However, those in tier 3 should avoid leaving their tier other than for work, education or caring responsibilities.



Other points to consider:

- Before travelling continue to check relevant the relevant travel advice for your destination and journey.
- Travel into the UK from abroad will continue to be governed by the existing travel corridor approach.
- Individuals will need to self-isolate for 14 days if arriving from or have travelled through a non-travel corridor country or territory.
- From 15th December 2020, passengers arriving into England from countries not featured on the government's travel corridor list will have the option to take a test after 5 days of self-isolation, with a negative result releasing them from the need to isolate.

Useful links

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-the-christmas-period>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/travel-advice>



3. What is the HSE advice on COVID-19 Secure over the festive period?

As part of their "Weekly Digest" bulletin last week the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) are reminding businesses that as they "get busier in the run-up to the festive period, they must all still have measures in place to protect workers, visitors and customers from the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19)."

They also highlight:

- COVID-secure spot checks and inspections (phone or in person) will continue through December 2020;
- Advice and guidance to manage risk and protect workers and visitors will be provided during HSE visits as needed, but where businesses are not meeting the required standards immediate action will be taken; and
- Where they take action, it could range from providing specific advice, issuing enforcement notices, stopping certain work practices until they are made safe and, where businesses fail to comply, this could lead to prosecution.

Particularly at this time of year - and especially with the year we've had - the desire to meet up for teams, departments and businesses, as well as families is strong for many. Keeping all your COVID-19 Secure practices in place is also important should you make the decision to meet up in person.

For those not following the rules there are consequences. The City of London police recently tweeted, "Officers had to issue our second £10,000 fine for an office party in the City last week, over 45 people attended the event with alcohol, a DJ and decks".

COVID-19 Secure has also come under the HSE "Work Right" campaign, which "aims to get businesses thinking about health and safety and how it applies to their businesses. The campaign looks to maximise participation and compliance in managing risk in the workplace by combining practical advice with simple actions businesses can take to manage workplace risk."

Useful links:

https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/regulating-health-and-safety/spot-inspections.htm?utm_source=govdelivery&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=coronavirus&utm_term=spot-inspections-headline&utm_content=digest-9-dec-20

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/campaigns/index.htm>

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