

# Coronavirus Covid-19; Engineers working on customer sites

## FS04

**Logistics, manufacturing and construction businesses have all been identified by the Government as important sectors vital to the economy during this national emergency. It is essential they continue to operate as near normal, whilst following social distancing and other best practice guidelines.**

Government policy is clear; staff should work from home as far as possible, but businesses should open unless they are prohibited from doing so, and social distancing must be maintained in the workplace and when travelling, in so far as is possible.

To maintain safe operation of all businesses, it is essential that the servicing, maintenance, inspection and Thorough Examination of Material Handling Equipment (MHE) continues. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has confirmed that the legal obligation to ensure equipment is safe remains fully in force. HSE has also stipulated that social distancing in the workplace must be maintained and that it will take enforcement action to ensure this where necessary.

Where sites are closed and access to MHE for service, maintenance and Thorough Examination is not possible, equipment should be removed from service and not re-activated until all outstanding activities have been completed. (see [BITA Fact Sheet FS02 – Standing down MHE](#) and [BITA Fact Sheet FS03 – Safe cleaning practices for MHE & plant.](#))

In exceptional circumstances, where equipment is critical to vital operations and it is not possible to arrange for Thorough Examination to be carried out to schedule, it may be possible to continue equipment operation beyond the period of inspection so long as an adequate Risk Assessment has been carried out in co-ordination with the Competent Person and there are sufficient mitigation measures to ensure a comparable degree of safety (see [BITA Fact Sheet FS05 – Thorough Examination](#) and [HSE guidance to duty holders and inspectors](#)).

## Safe Working Practices

Clearly, it is necessary to make some changes to working practices for engineers and technicians visiting customer sites to ensure they can adhere to social distancing recommendations of at least 2 metres (6ft 6ins) in order to minimise the risk of infection and complete their work safely..

### Sites should

- Provide a method for entering and leaving sites which complies with social distancing and which minimises the risk of contamination through shared contact surfaces, e.g. touch screens or pens.
- Recommend arrival time slots to prevent congestion at reception areas.
- Site inductions should be delivered electronically and in advance where possible.
- Ensure all visitors to the site have access to sanitary and welfare facilities whenever required.

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- Keep servicing, inspection and Thorough Examination of equipment up to date – and where this cannot be done because the whole site is closed, they must ensure that use of equipment with a lapsed regime is effectively prevented until such time as all outstanding requirements under both LOLER and PUWER are brought up to date.
- Identify a suitable safe and segregated working area for the engineer, and
- Agree a plan on the disposal of waste, for instance additional waste created through cleaning down equipment prior to commencement of work.

**Sites should not:**

- Expose visiting engineers to potential sources of infection, for instance by expecting them to decontaminate equipment which has been operated by someone with suspected COVID-19.

**Visiting engineers should:**

- Check for symptoms of COVID-19 before setting off to work. Self-isolate if they are suffering from a fever, a new persistent dry cough, loss of sense of smell or taste, or one of the other symptoms listed by HM Government.
- Not go into work if anyone in their household is self-isolating.
- Notify the site of their anticipated arrival time and scope of work and agree safe working practices. Note: this may be done via the engineer's service desk rather than directly with the site.
- Travel to site independently whilst maintaining social distancing. Where multiple occupancy of a vehicle is unavoidable:
  - Consider the use of a face covering
  - Consider screens and empty seats to minimise the risk of transmission, however, screens must not reduce driver visibility
  - Ensure the vehicle is well ventilated, for instance by keeping windows open
  - Clean the contact surfaces of the vehicle before each journey
  - Utilise a fixed pairing or fixed team system to reduce the number of people in contact with any individual
- Ensure that site rules are followed, and that the site is aware of their arrival and expected departure times, and the status of work activities, especially where outstanding or incomplete.
- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before fitting and after removing PPE and before commencing work and again upon completion.
- Where possible, use signage, cones and tape to segregate the working area.
- Wear single use disposable gloves.
- Wipe down MHE before commencing work (see [BITA Fact Sheet FS03 – Safe cleaning practices for MHE & plant](#)).
- Consider infection risk in their pre-work Risk Assessment, for example social distancing and contact surfaces.
- Discuss any concerns over social distancing with their site contact or line manager before commencing/continuing with work activities.
- Remove or dispose of waste appropriately.

### Visiting engineers should not:

- Commence/continue any work activity which cannot be completed safely.
- Deviate from pre-existing Risk Assessments and Method Statements without discussing with their line manager.

### Supervisors/Line Managers should:

- Review and update Method Statements and Risk Assessments regularly and inform staff of the results.
- Liaise with Customer Sites where necessary to ensure the responsibilities of both parties are fully understood, for instance where provision of welfare facilities may have been denied or where engineers are being asked to clean equipment suspected of being positively contaminated with COVID-19.
- Talk to their staff to ensure they understand what is required and that they are comfortable to proceed.
- Intervene to prevent unsafe practices and report non-compliances to Customer Sites.
- Maintain records of individual contacts and work activities where full social distancing has not been maintained. This will facilitate later contact tracing if required. Partnering and teams should be of fixed composition insofar as is possible.
- Ensure adequate provision of PPE, and, where appropriate, adequate arrangements for laundering thereof.

## Social Distancing

Engineers should maintain a 2 metre (6ft 6ins) distance between themselves and another person as much as possible. Additional protective measures are required where the distance between people may be less than 2m, and tasks requiring proximity of 1m or less should be avoided where possible and should be discussed with a line manager before proceeding.

Some tasks however cannot be completed by a single engineer working alone. In these circumstances the specific risks should be considered before starting and control measure put in place to mitigate the risk, including:

- Consider whether the activity is essential, or whether it could be postponed.
- Consider alternative working methods to enable the activity to be safely completed by a single person.
- Identify and implement mitigating actions to reduce the risk of virus transmission.
  - A simple face covering, similar to a surgical mask, which covers the nose and mouth, should be worn. This should not however replace social distancing and personal hygiene measures which should be followed as far as is possible. Reusable face coverings should be laundered daily and changed if the covering becomes damp.
  - Consider the use of screens or barriers to separate people from each other for routine tasks.

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- Where more than one person is required for a task the number of people each person has contact with should be reduced by using fixed teams or partnering.
- UK Government advice is that where the work is essential and 2 m distance to co-workers cannot be maintained, then you should work side by side, or facing away from each other, rather than face to face, in so far as is possible. The activity time working in this manner should be minimised because the protection provided is reduced.

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