

Protecting your people and your property during the COVID-19 outbreak



Introduction

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak is first and foremost a human tragedy, affecting hundreds of thousands of people to date.

It is also having a worrying and significant impact on businesses, both globally, and here in Ireland.

During these unprecedented times many businesses have temporarily closed their doors or reduced operating hours to play their part in slowing the spread of the virus.

Many employees now find themselves suddenly working from home on a temporary basis, not

having done so before. This presents challenges for both employers and employees in ensuring a safe working environment.

Many premises are now also left unoccupied for extended periods, putting them at higher risk of being targeted by criminals who may take advantage.

We understand that businesses may be struggling to manage the new set of risks which they find themselves facing. We have created this guide to help your clients, and their employees, protect themselves during this difficult time.

In this guide you will find...

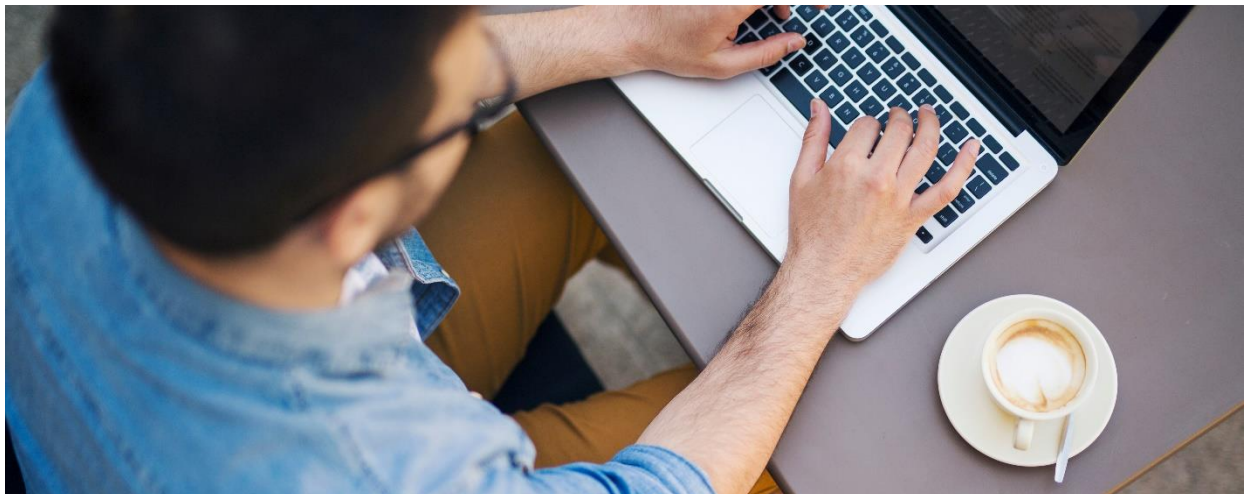
- Working from Home Guidelines
- Keeping your premises secure
- Fire defence for your premises



Working from Home Guidelines for Employers

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005, employers have specific duties to **ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees.** These duties include the employee's workspace, where employees are required to work from home.

Employees will also find the guidelines set out below useful in preparing themselves and their workspace, if they have been asked to work from home.



Employers' duties

Key duties that apply to the work activity and workspace include:

- managing and conducting all work activities to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare of employees
- providing safe systems of work that are planned, organised, and maintained
- assessing risks and implementing appropriate control measures
- providing safe equipment including personal protective equipment, where necessary
- providing employees with information, instruction, training and supervision in relation to safety and health
- having plans in place for emergencies



Now, more than ever,
communication is important.
Check in regularly to see how
employees are getting on in
their new circumstances.

Things to confirm with your employees

Employers need to consult with their employees to be sure that:

- the employee is aware of any specific risks regarding working from home
- the work activity and the temporary workspace are suitable
- they provide suitable equipment to enable the work to be done
- there is a pre-arranged means of contact

Equipment already in use in the workplace e.g. laptop, mouse, monitor, keyboard and headset could be used for temporary home-working. If the employer provides any equipment, it must be suitable and in good condition.

Note: Suitable equipment already available in the employee's home can also be considered.

Some questions to consider

As an employer you should think about:

- How will you keep in touch with employees?
- What work activity will they be doing (and for how long)?
- Can it be done safely?
- Do you need to put control measures in place to protect them?

Lone working without supervision

When people are working alone, they lack direct supervision or colleagues to help them if things go wrong. This means a greater level of risk.

Keep in touch and ensure regular contact to make sure they are healthy and safe.

If contact is poor, employees may feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned. This can affect stress levels and mental health.



Working with display screen equipment

For people who are working at home using display screen equipment (DSE) on a long-term basis, there is a risk of stress or injury which must be controlled. This includes undertaking home workstation assessments.

There are some simple steps employees can take to reduce the risks from display screen work:

- break up long spells of DSE work with rest breaks (at least 5 minutes every hour) or changes in activity
- avoid awkward, static postures by regularly changing position
- get up and move or do stretching exercises
- avoiding eye fatigue by changing focus or blinking from time to time

Specialised DSE equipment needs

Where an employee requires specialised DSE, employers should try to meet those needs where possible.

For some equipment (e.g. keyboards, mouse, riser) this could mean allowing workers to take this equipment home.

For other larger items (e.g. ergonomic chairs, height-adjustable desks) encourage workers to try other ways of creating a comfortable working environment (e.g. supporting cushions).

Stress and mental health

Home working can cause work-related stress and affect people's mental health. Being away from managers and colleagues could make it difficult to get proper support.

Keep in touch

Keep in direct contact with home workers and put procedures in place so you can recognise signs of stress as early as possible.

It's also important to have an emergency point of contact and share this so people know how to get help if they need it.

In the event of an incident...

1. Complete an accident report form



2. Take photographs of the accident scene and attach to accident report form



3. Forward accident report forms as well as any photos/other information in connection with any accident or claim to your broker immediately



Keeping your premises secure

This section aims to **help business owners and managers**, of both large and small businesses, **secure their premises** against crime, including malicious attack during these difficult times.



Intruder alarms

- Ensure Intruder Alarms are maintained and operational

If any faults are noted, immediately contact your security company to arrange for the fault to be repaired
- Ask your alarm monitoring centre to test the signal to ensure there are no faults present that would prevent them from being notified of an alarm activation
- Report any faults to your Insurance Broker, or to RSA directly on 01 290 1000. Then advise them when the fault is addressed and the system is fully operational again



Make your business unattractive to thieves.

Visible alarms, CCTV, locks, and other security will act as a deterrent

Locks

- Ensure all doors are locked and secured. Where roller shutters are available make sure they are used. Where possible, the electrical supply to motors should be isolated and locked out

This includes doors to external plant rooms
- Lock and secure yards. Gates should be secured with high grade close shackle padlocks

Lighting

- Keep internal and external lights on where possible to give the illusion of occupancy

Good lighting creates a degree of vulnerability for the criminal or trespasser. Ideally the entire site should be illuminated externally

Monitoring of the premises

- Ensure CCTV Systems are fully operational and that hard drives are managed and maintained to allow data to be recorded
- If your business is located in larger estates served by a security patrol, liaise with the security company to advise them of your status and the details of senior staff to be contacted in the event of any incidents
- If possible, exchange details of key staff with neighbouring businesses. You can share information about any suspect behaviour in the area or anything you notice when carrying out site inspections

Access and inspections

- Where practical, block or section off parking lots to prevent vehicles from entering the property
- Internal and external inspections should be carried out at least weekly (if permissible). If there are any signs of attempts to gain entry or vandalism, these must be reported to your broker or RSA Insurance directly

Repairs will need to be made immediately
- Cancel non-essential deliveries

- Review or update your list of staff who are authorised to access the premises during this period and provide unique alarm codes to them

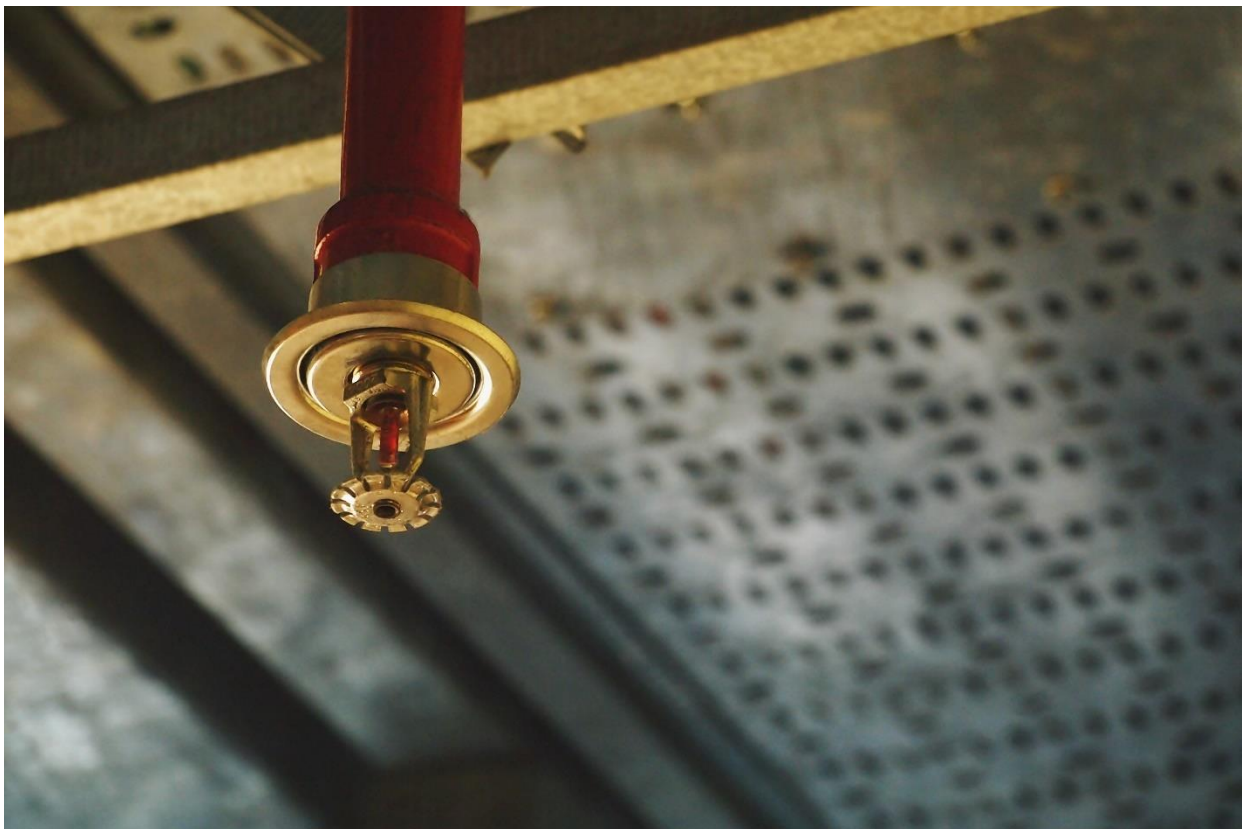
This includes senior staff tasked with carrying out inspections

- Businesses operating reduced hours should ensure that senior staff tasked with providing access, or receiving essential deliveries, are also issued with unique alarm codes
- During this period businesses with access control systems (e.g. cards and fobs) should deactivate or suspend individual access rights so that only necessary staff have access
- Some staff assigned to roles as part of your lockdown management plans may themselves be directly affected by COVID-19. Review contact numbers and access privileges regularly to reflect this
- You may also want to use this as an opportunity to audit your general access privileges to make sure the right people have access to the right areas of the building in future

Consider taking some time to review your settings, so they properly reflect the security levels of the areas you're protecting
- Ensure clean desk policies are adhered to and that all documentation is locked away

Fire defence for your premises

This section outlines the measures business owners and managers, can take to **secure their premises against the outbreak of a fire** while they are unoccupied.



Fire alarms and sprinkler systems

- Ensure automatic fire alarms, sprinkler systems and other fire suppression systems are maintained and operational

If any faults are noted, immediately contact your approved maintenance service providers to arrange for the fault to be repaired

- Ask your alarm monitoring centre to test the signal to ensure there are no faults present that would prevent them from being notified of an alarm activation
- Report any faults to your Insurance Broker, or to RSA directly on 01 290 1000. Then advise them when the fault is addressed and the system is fully operational

Housekeeping and waste management

- Ensure a good level of housekeeping remains after locking down

All waste produced on the premises must be collected. Check and clear out under desks, around machinery and under work benches and place the waste in the bins or waste skips

- All combustibles and flammables must be stored away and well secured

- In workshop settings any cleaning rags soiled with oil, grease and other flammables should be discarded safely or at least stored in closed steel containers
- Those larger premises with waste skips must arrange for collections

Businesses should assign a senior staff member to ensure that the domestic waste bins are left outside for the next collection and then the empty bins returned to the premises and locked away after collection

- All waste skips and bins stored in the open should be at least 10m from the building and a minimum of 2m from the perimeter fence

If this is not possible, lockable enclosed metal skips or a secure enclosed store or compound should be provided, located as far as practical from door and window openings



Look around the premises for potential fire hazards.

Take steps to eliminate or minimise them.

Plant and equipment

- Non-essential plant and equipment must be switched off. Forklifts and other battery-operated equipment **MUST NOT** be left on charge
- The regular site inspections, referred to under *Keeping your premises secure*, should include inspections on essential plant and services left on duty to ensure these are running safely
- Talk to service providers and contractors to confirm if statutory and preventative maintenance inspections of plant and equipment can continue as planned, dependant on their own company COVID-19 policies

If they confirm that they will not be providing services, request advise on how to mitigate any potential exposures (breakdowns etc.) for essential plant and services left on duty, as well as for when starting up plant and machinery left idle for an extended period

Utilities

- Implement office and canteen/kitchen closedown procedures. Ensure all desks are clear, portable electrical equipment unplugged (kitchens and canteens!) and that mobile chargers and heaters are unplugged etc.
- Non-essential gas, electricity and water supplies should be disconnected at the perimeter of the building with certain exceptions, such as electrical and water supply to any fire alarms, intruder alarms, CCTV systems and fire suppression systems (sprinklers etc) that must remain in operation

Contact us

We understand the importance of working together during these difficult times. If we can help you, please get in touch.

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