RSA INSURANCE

COVID-19 guidelines for **phased return of outdoor workers**
(e.g. construction workers, gardeners, including people working on allotments)

Introduction

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…

- Employers duties

- Permit phased return of outdoor workers guidelines

- Further information

- Employee safety briefing sign off

Permit **phased return of outdoor workers**

Guidelines for Employers

Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (SHWW) Act, 2005, employers have specific duties to **ensure the safety, health and welfare at work of all employees**.

The primary obligation under the SHWW Act 2005 is for the employer to "ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees." Employers must be able to demonstrate that they have done all that was reasonably practicable and that to do more would have been grossly disproportionate to the risk.

While there is no expectation that employers will be able to guarantee that staff will not contract COVID-19, the 2005 Act requires employers to introduce specific health surveillance and protection measures in order to discharge their obligations.

For the permit phased return of outdoor workers (e.g. construction workers, gardeners, including people working on allotments), employers should also be familiar with requirements set out in The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2013 which

were made under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and the provisions of the 2005 Act and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Applications) Regulations 2007 (where applicable).

Employers **duties**

Key duties include:

- managing and conducting all work activities to ensure, as far as practical, 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

Return to Work Safely Protocol

COVID-19 Specific National Protocol for Employers and Workers

A **Return to Work Safely Protocol**, has been jointly prepared by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), the Health Services Executive (HSE), and the Department of Health which has been designed to support employers and workers to put measures in place that will prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. You can find the **Return to Work Safety Protocol** here: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol/

This guideline document is not a substitute for the Return to Work Safety Protocol but has been prepared to provide general guidance on Industry specific measures which should be taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Some **questions to consider**

As an employer you should think about the following:

- Has the work been adequately risk assessed in advance of returning to work?
- Are suitable arrangements in place?
- Can the work be done safely?
- Do you need to put control measures in place to further protect employees?

You should review / revise your approach as required.

COVID–19
Compliance Officer

Have you appointed a COVID-19 Compliance Officer who has been fully briefed to oversee all matters related to managing the health and wellbeing of all employees?

Health Check
for Returning Employees

Have you established and issued a pre-return to work form for workers to complete at least 3 days in advance of the return to work? A copy of this form can be found in the Return to Work Safety Protocol link at the rear of this document.

Has an COVID-19 response plan been developed / updated?

Are suitable arrangements in place for dealing with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace?

Health and Safety
Documentation

Have written procedures including response plans been put in place for managing COVID-19 to ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, a safe place of work and safe use of equipment for all returning employees?

Have these procedures been communicated to all employees in a form, manner and language that they understand?

Social Distancing

In order to slow the transmission rate of COVID-19 a social distancing of a minimum of 2 meters is recommended by the HSE.

Things to consider:

- Travel to / from work – where possible workers should travel to site alone. Where this is not possible they should sit as far apart as the vehicle allows and keep windows open for additional ventilation. Avoid using public transport if possible. Where this is not possible take all necessary precautions to reduce the possibility of infection

- Ensure the workplace can allow for the recommended 2 metre separation in so far as is reasonably practicable – these include general places of work as well as welfare facilities such as drying rooms, canteens and toilets

- Where the social distancing recommendation of 2 metres cannot be achieved due to the work being undertaken, additional risk control measures must be implemented as required

Hygiene

All employees should wash their hands well and often to avoid contamination – for a minimum of 20 seconds.

Other things to consider include:

- Ensure there is access to facilities to support hand hygiene (e.g. hand sanitiser / hand wipes / hand washing facilities)

- All surfaces should be regularly disinfected / cleaned

- Limit plant and equipment usage to one person where possible. Clean down touchpoints before and after use

- Try to avoid sharing of hand tools and equipment. Clean down touchpoints before and after use

- Encourage all employees to:

  o Practice correct coughing and sneezing etiquette

  o Wash hands before and after eating, smoking or vaping and after toilet use

  o Avoid touching their face

  o Dispose of used tissues correctly

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is any device or appliance designed to be worn or held by an individual for protection against one or more health and safety hazards. Examples of such include safety helmets, gloves, eye protection, high-visibility clothing, safety footwear and safety harnesses.

Now more than ever PPE should be personal and not shared with any other person during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is recommended that disposable gloves should not be worn in place of washing hands. Wearing disposable gloves can give a false sense of security and hands can become contaminated when gloves are taken off.

Face masks are also unlikely to be of any benefit if the wearer is not sick. The preferred approach is to ensure social distancing and good hygiene measures.

Further Information

Rialtas na hEireann
Government of Ireland
https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/22829a-return-to-work-safely-protocol/

The Health and Safety Executive
www.hse.ie

The Health and Safety Authority
www.hsa.ie

The Construction Industry Federation
www.cif.ie

Return of Outdoor Workers
Induction Checklist

The following checklist is intended as a guide for you to confirm with your employees that they are aware of the HSE / HSA guidelines for return to work. Use this checklist to confirm with each employee, that they understand the protocols under the following headings.

Pre-return to work form completed	☐
Employee is aware of and has access to appointed COVID-19 officer	☐
Social Distancing	
Travelling to / from work	☐
On site written procedures for managing COVID-19 on return to work	☐
Additional control measures where required 2 metre social distancing is not possible	☐
Hygiene	
Handwashing	☐
Coughing / Sneezing Etiquette	☐
Touchpoints	☐
Cleaning / Disinfecting	☐
Welfare	
Toilets	☐
Drying Rooms	☐
Canteen	☐
Tools, Plant & Equipment	
Controlled Access / Use	☐
PPE	
Provision / Use	☐

Trainer: (Name & Signature)	**Date**:
Staff Member: (Name & Signature)	**Date**:

Contact us

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

Michael Doyle
Risk Control Surveyor

michael.doyle@ie.rsagroup.com

Sean Golden
Risk Control Surveyor

sean.golden@ie.rsagroup.com

Gerard Murray
Risk Control Engineer

gerard.murray@ie.rsagroup.com

RSA INSURANCE

The information set out in this document constitutes a set of general guidelines and should not be construed or relied upon as specialist advice. Therefore, RSA Insurance Ireland DAC accepts no responsibility towards any person relying upon these Risk Management Guidelines nor accepts any liability whatsoever for the accuracy of data supplied by another party or the consequences of reliance upon it.