

# BUILDING AND MACHINERY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN RE-OPENING YOUR BUSINESS DURING CORONAVIRUS

Businesses are starting to re-open as the Coronavirus restrictions are lifted. Understandably considerable focus has been given towards re-opening in a Covid-secure manner with incorporation of new systems, controls and measures that include social distancing and increased cleaning / hand hygiene. However, as businesses move towards the “new normal” it’s important that routine building re-opening and machinery start-up measures are not overlooked.

We have produced our top 6 safety steps that should be considered as part of your re-opening plan.

## 1. SITE INSPECTION

Undertake a thorough self-inspection of the site prior to re-opening. Visually inspect buildings both internally and externally, as well as the site perimeter.

Look for any potentially unsafe or abnormal conditions, such as signs of damage or vandalism, maintenance issues, water ingress, improper housekeeping or storage, etc. and rectify these as soon as possible.

Inspect your storage facilities for any signs of spills, wear and tear and check for already opened storage vessels / containers / bags / silos for possible oxidation / chemical reaction / rusting / rotting etc.

## 2. FIRE SAFETY

Check that the sprinkler and fire alarm panels are fully operational and free from any faults or defects. For sprinkler systems your competent person should ensure that sprinkler valves are padlocked in the open position, power supplies to the pumps are on and sufficient fuel is present within any diesel motors. For fire alarms undertake a full functional test of the fire detection and alarm system, using multiple call points across the site. In both instances re-instate your schedule of inspections, service and maintenance plans if these have lapsed as a consequence of the building closure.

In addition you should complete a full discharge test of the emergency lighting system across the site. You should also visually inspect all fire extinguishers to ensure that they are correctly located, full and not obviously damaged, and that annual servicing is within date. They must not be used to prop open fire doors as part of any Coronavirus measures aimed at reducing contact with doors.

Check that fire escape routes are clear of any obstructions and that internal fire doors and final fire escape doors are unlocked, undamaged and close properly. Also check that automatic fire dampers, smoke venting and smoke extraction systems are operational where fitted.

Make sure the above checks are recorded in your fire log book.



Review your Fire Risk Assessment and fire evacuation plans ahead of re-opening. Make sure that your Coronavirus control measures do not compromise existing fire safety measures, e.g. ensure alcohol-based (flammable) disinfectants, such as hand sanitizers that may have been introduced into the workplace are located away from ignition sources and that bulk supplies of alcohol-based disinfectants are stored in proprietary flammable cabinets.

You should also review the adequacy of existing fire assembly points and ensure social distancing guidelines can be followed. Ensure you have sufficient fire marshals in place as a result of potentially reduced staffing e.g. due to self-isolation / illness / furlough.

### **3. ELECTRICS**

Visually check individual circuits and distribution boards for any signs of damage or deterioration before switching the power back on. You should also ensure electrical rooms and riser cupboards are clear of combustible materials.

In the event of any visual defects, or signs of water ingress you should immediately contact a qualified electrical contractor.

When it's deemed safe to do so, power should be restored in sections to avoid voltage fluctuations that could damage sensitive electronic equipment. Re-check circuits and distribution boards for any signs of any abnormal conditions or smells within 30 minutes of the power having been restored. You may wish to repeat this exercise after 24 hours.

Check that you have a valid Electrical Installation Condition Report that is marked as "Satisfactory". Arrange for a UKAS accredited electrician (i.e. NICEIC) to undertake a new inspection where this has lapsed during lockdown. You shouldn't re-open where you have concerns over the safety of electrical wiring.

### **4. RE-STARTING IDLE MACHINERY**

When restarting idle machinery, operators should follow standard operating procedures and manufacturers guidelines for bringing equipment or processes that have been shutdown back online. Ensure any hazardous machinery or plant remains isolated and lock-out tags remain in place to ensure there is no automatic start up and / or that any stored energy has been safely released. Calibrate any safety devices and monitoring equipment prior to commencing operations. Ensure all guarding is in place and any brakes are in working order.

Check for any signs of rust, delayering or deformation. For parts that are concealed, you may need to do a functional test looking and listening for any indications that the moving parts are in distress. Other ongoing planned preventative maintenance and / or servicing of items such as intruder alarms, cooking ranges, heating systems, work at height systems, plant and manufacturing lines, especially those involving hazardous substances and / or flammable liquids etc. should be re-instated.

A plan of action should be put in place to catch up on those areas that were lapsed during the period of shut down and have now become overdue. Ensure critical tasks are prioritised for completion ahead of re-start.

Make sure your Statutory Thorough Examinations are up to date (e.g. for your lifting equipment, pressure systems, local exhaust ventilation, etc). You must also ensure that any deep fat frying cooking extraction has been deep cleaned by a Building Engineering Services Association (BESA) accredited cleaning contractor.

## 5. LEGIONELLA

Inactivity of your water system could cause conditions that promote growth of the bacteria associated with Legionnaires disease. It's important that before recommissioning the water system a competent person reviews your legionella risk assessment. This should be undertaken at least three weeks before re-opening to allow for measures such as legionella sampling and building chlorination to be carried out if necessary.

## 6. BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Review the effectiveness of your business continuity plan. Revise the plan as needed based on lessons learned during the temporary shutdown to keep your emergency planning and procedures up-to-date.

Consider response and contingency plans in the event of an outbreak of Coronavirus within the business or another lockdown if there's a second or third wave of the pandemic. Also consider fire, third party suppliers and key customers.

For further information please see:

[GOV.UK Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Health and Safety Executive:

[hse.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://hse.gov.uk/coronavirus)

And additional COVID-19 guidance for:

Scotland: [gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot)

Northern Ireland: [nidirect.gov](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

Wales: [gov.wales](https://www.gov.wales)

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