

Manufacturing update 4:

Safe systems of work and personal protective equipment



Following on from our Update 3, *'What's essential and what should I do if I'm asked to attend work?'* many **stewards have been raising concerns about the actions employers are required to take to protect workers remaining at work** given the unprecedented challenges and risks associated with the COVID-19. While it's not possible in an update like this to give a detailed response to these concerns, and the legislation covering workplace health safety and welfare at work is extensive, we are able to outline the areas that should form the basis of discussions. Further information can be found on the Coronavirus page on the unions website at <https://unitetheunion.org/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19-advice/>

At all times our priority must be to ensure the health and safety of our members, their families and communities as well as their financial and future job security. At this time government advice is that manufacturing should, where it's safe to do so, continue to operate. Given this, many employers will want to remain open even when on the face of it they're not supporting *'essential services'*. Given this our stewards and safety representatives are our front line in talks with employers about necessary actions.

- ⇒ **Where it's not possible to work safely and, given the advice from government and our public health authorities, we cannot be satisfied that our members are indeed safe, employers must take appropriate action to temporarily close until such measures can be put into place.**

WHAT THE UNION IS SAYING:

- ⇒ Aside from established safe systems of work and risk assessments, specific measures will now need to be taken to **enforce social distancing (two metres apart) and/or the provision of adequate and suitable personal protective equipment** to ensure that there is no mixed-use contamination and/or ingestion of the COVID-19 virus at work.
- ⇒ Workers should **avoid using public transport** and if this is not possible arrangements should be put in place to **stagger start and finish times to avoid rush hour** and create a **buffer between shift change over times** to avoid unnecessary contamination. Employers should ensure a supply of **free public parking** for workers where this is not available on-site.
- ⇒ **Canteens, rest and other shared facilities** must be safe spaces which, if remaining open, must ensure safe **distancing measures** and strict **cleaning regimes** are in place and enforced. **No multi-use cutlery or crockery should be used.**
- ⇒ Workers should not use **biometric 'clocking in' systems, shared tooling** without adequate protective clothing and a **supply of hand cleanser and suitable washing facilities must be available** throughout the workplace.
- ⇒ **Changing facilities** should be available to ensure that workers can **change into and out of work clothes prior to travelling** to and from home.

Clearly the above is not an exhaustive list and specific industry measures will need to be taken dependent on the level of risk identified by risk assessment.

Those employers that attempt to ignore advice, put workers at unnecessary risk and profit before people in a national emergency will be called out - publicly and loudly!

In solidarity

Steve Turner
Assistant General Secretary

