Manufacturing update 10:
Returning to work – we've got your back!

MANUFACTURING MATTERS
Defending jobs & communities

Following the **confusion and anxiety caused by the Prime Minister's latest announcements** on loosening the lockdown, I wanted to update you on what we expect to see from both government and employers as we move back to work in a phased and safe way. All workers have the right to a safe place of work and employers the duty to provide one. **While we would always urge workers to act collectively, you have a protected right to leave a place of danger if you feel unsafe** (*Section 44, Employment Rights Act 1996*) **and if you do, your union will stand with you - we've got your back!**

Discussions with government on a safe return to work have been patchy and following our criticism of initial draft guidance we have not seen any further drafts. **The guidance to be published on safe workplaces highlighted by the Prime Minister, has not been seen by the trade unions.**

⇒ Our convenors' survey has provided us with a wealth of **detailed evidence on safe working as well as best practice,** ensuring we can collectively learn the lessons from our frontline.

⇒ In addition, **analysis of Covid-19 risks and necessary control measures introduced with our support, has informed our discussions with government and industry federations** on practical measures to implement as part of a safe return to work for those that have been on furlough.

⇒ We are in the process of producing a **'COVID-19 Best Practice Guide'** to a safe return to work for our manufacturing sectors. We will circulate shortly to officers and representatives on the ground.

OUR KEY DEMANDS FOR ANY SAFE RETURN TO WORK:

⇒ Any **guidance** issued by government on safe workplaces **must be *'clear instruction'* not *'consideration'*** and signpost *'best practice'* developed by industry on the ground.

⇒ A return to work **must be governed by science not politics** and avoid any **risk of a second wave**.

⇒ **Covid-19 Risk Assessments** must be carried out with the full involvement of Health and Safety Representatives. A clear **hierarchy of control measures** must be followed to address any identified risks; **Elimination, Substitution, Engineering Controls, Administrative Controls and Personal Protective Equipment** (PPE).

⇒ **PPE is, and must remain, a last resort** in the control of any identified risks.

⇒ **Social distancing** must be enforced; **a clear test, trace and isolate strategy** must be in place and **facilities for regular hand washing** must be available.

⇒ **Risk Assessments must be published** to ensure transparency and allow for effective monitoring.

⇒ Our 100,000 trained **Health and Safety Representatives should be released to work with and guide employers and workers across the economy** as part of a comprehensive *'safe return plan'*.

⇒ **A safe return to work must be phased and coordinated; schools**, **childcare** and **public transport** will need to be safely re-opened and/or increasing capacity to safely accommodate workers travelling to and from work and respecting social distancing measures at all times.

⇒ **Workers must know their rights and how to exercise them.** Clear information must be provided and publicly posted in workplaces.

Our detailed Unite Risk Assessment guide for officers and representatives can be downloaded at *https://unitetheunion.org/media/3069/009-riskassessandprocedures-2020-05-07.pdf*

In solidarity

Steve Turner
Assistant General Secretary

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