COVID-19

SHQ Guidance note

Guidance note
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Introduction

The current global pandemic and the suspension of normal construction site operations arising from COVID-19, poses some unique and unprecedented issues for clients. This guidance note sets out the immediate and ongoing health, safety and welfare related actions recommended for construction sites and aims to assist clients meet their legal and/or moral duty to ensure - so far as reasonably practicable - the health, safety and welfare of those affected by their operations, as well as protection of corporate reputation from health and safety risks.

It sets out recommended actions to take during ongoing restrictions due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, in order to minimise the impact on health and safety of:

1. Ongoing operational sites;
2. Those sites that are being temporarily closed (hibernating);
3. Sites while in hibernation, and,
4. Considerations for reawakening sites and re-commencing working activities

It has been prepared by Turner & Townsend SHEQ consultants and is intended to assist clients in understanding what measures should be undertaken by project teams, predominantly by the main contractor (principal contractor).

Safe operation, hibernation and re-awakening of sites during COVID-19

2.1 Safe operation of sites

In order to maintain safe operation of sites that remain open throughout COVID-19 restrictions, the principal contractor should confirm to the client (or their representative) that they are instigating suitable procedures to manage and control health, safety and welfare on the site - taking into account the latest guidance from the relevant health authority / advisory body.

This should include, as a minimum, procedures to:

- Ensure that non-essential visitors are excluded from site
- Manage entry/exit from site by creating new access points/separate entry/exits to prevent people getting close to each other. Provide hand sanitisers [60% alcohol based], at these points, and/or encourage washing for 20 seconds with soap and water on entry and before leaving site. Regularly clean these washing facilities
- Suspend all operation of key code/fingerprint access requiring physical contact - use swipe cards or gate personnel with registers
- Check lone working policies – more than one person opening up/closing the site
- Check agency staff are local to the site - if not consider substitutes
- Introduce staggered working and staggered meal breaks – avoiding public transport peak times (typically 05:45 - 7:30 and 16:00 - 17:30)
- Undertake risk/task/activity assessments to capture social distancing requirements and maintain safety – if this social distancing is not possible and close proximity working is the only way to carry out the activity – risk assessments must be revised to take CV-19 into account
- Risk assess activities to select the correct use of PPE. Oversee the correct wearing of PPE
Supply appropriate disposable masks / filters for respiratory protective equipment, etc. Remember face fit tests are required for non-disposable masks.

Make sure that all activities - including deliveries - maintain social distancing for the public/neighbours of the site. Drivers to remain in cabs if possible.

Consider one-way routes around the sites and prepare questions on clipboards for delivery drivers to answer through the window without them needing to exit the cabs etc. on arrival.

Check set-down/storage areas - can these be reduced to allow for more working space on sites – such as can working on rebar take place outside of trench working?

Hold inductions/meetings outside if possible to maintain social distancing and maximise use of space. Reduce the number of meetings and consider Skype/MS Teams/Zoom or similar.

Maintain on-boarding for new staff – can inductions and on-boarding be carried out online?

Ensure safe travel to site: use of car/van in preference to public transport. Discourage car sharing. Encourage cycling and provide additional parking for additional vehicles.

Ensure suitable procedures are in place, if vehicle sharing is unavoidable and social distancing can be maintained e.g. same teams to car share each time, keep windows open and face away from each other. Wipe down all surfaces in the car [and handles] which may be touched, using gloves and standard cleaning materials and then dispose of them.

Restrict numbers using welfare facilities/canteens at any one time to maintain social distancing.

Clean all welfare facilities and canteens thoroughly and regularly.

Suspend use of water fountains etc. Supply bottled water as required.

Encourage workers to bring prepared meals in reusable containers they take home.

Instigate enhanced cleaning/sanitising regime especially any communal areas & touch points.

Control skip and equipment hire so that people visiting site can maintain social distancing - place equipment for off-hiring in a segregated space to be picked up.

Increase the number of bins on-site to cope with the increase in disposable cleaning/ drying materials – increase the disposal regime.

Where equipment is normally shared – order more or arrange for cleaning after use. Discourage the sharing of radios commonly used on-site for communication.

Support the right for individuals to refuse work on health & safety grounds should suitable systems and procedures not be in place and carried out.

Update incident reporting procedures and check if reporting to regulatory authorities now includes for COVID-19; for example, this could include:

- An unintended incident at work which has led to someone’s possible /actual exposure to coronavirus must be reported as a dangerous occurrence.
- A worker has been diagnosed as having COVID-19 and there is reasonable evidence that it was as a result of exposure at work must be reported as a case of disease.
- A worker dies as a result of occupational exposure to coronavirus.

This guidance has been produced by our team of SHEQ professionals and also following consideration of industry guidance including from the UK’s Construction Leadership Council (CLC) - Site Operating Procedures Version 3, a full copy of which is available online at: https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/site-operating-procedures-during-covid-19/
2.2 Temporary hibernation of sites

During periods where construction sites are to go into a hibernation phase, i.e. be temporarily closed the main/principal contractor should confirm to the client (or their representative) that, in advance of closure, they will:

- Revisit and update the construction phase plan/construction safety plan/contractor H&S plan, or equivalent and any supporting safe systems of work (SSOW) to reflect current activities, closing the site and maintaining safety arrangements on the unoccupied site
- Make sure that the updated CPP and a record of all up to date inspections can be accessed off-site
- Whatever the temporary and new arrangements (for re-awakening) are planned to be, communicate this to all sub-contractors and other stakeholders
- Review emergency arrangements to prove that they still have the required number of first aiders/fire wardens for the numbers of operatives on site during wind down – being mindful that the emergency services response times will have been impacted by the need for increased call-outs to members of the public and reduced staffing levels due to sickness
- Review the programme to check that all planned activities can continue until the site closes: checking if any are interdependent i.e. are materials required to finish tasks? Is lifting equipment required for materials already expected to be delivered?
- Review areas around the site to identify where additional set down areas can be cleared for a re-start / additional site welfare / additional site parking etc.
- Review traffic routes around site to maintain social distancing until such time as this is not a recommended way of interacting
- Ensure that non-essential visitors to site are told not to attend site – is it necessary for the clerk of works/approved inspectors to attend?
- Reschedule meetings off-site where possible in the run up to hibernation, and during it, to be held by other means (e.g. Skype, MST, Zoom) to ensure that design and planning continue
- Put in place a means of communicating to employees the status of the site during hibernation and moving into re-awakening. Include a facility for employees and subcontractors to notify if they are unable to be available/return to work
- Off-hire any plant/equipment/tools that are not needed, to reduce hire costs and loss through break-ins to site whilst empty
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- Portaloos / mobile toilets, if still operating, will need to be off-hired or at least emptied prior to closing the site.
- Make sure that all lifting "devices" and plant equipment are lowered to ground/have “buckets” lowered to ground – and all keys removed from site.
- If the site forms part of a temporary fire escape route for an adjacent building and or is part of a building refurbishment/extension/part of a building in beneficial occupation – make sure that fire escape routes are still viable or agree and communicate alternative arrangements.
- Display on the outside of the site contact details in case of emergency for the emergency services. These must include the contact details of key holders.
- Secure stored materials so that they are not able to fly out of the site/leak or leach out of the site.
- Secure all fuel containers or lock them away. Adopt the same approach for combustibles / hazardous substances / items.
- Consider the remote monitoring of sites whilst the site is closed or visit the site periodically to check it has not been broken into/compromised e.g. webcam/use of drones (subject to any local drone flying / operator licence restrictions).
- Check none of the actions you take compromise your insurance arrangements: keep insurances up to date.
- Reduce staff levels, by releasing staff from site as activities start to cease but retain as a priority before the site closes completely, (until not required) employees with safety critical roles:
  - Site manager/supervisor who has the authority to stop the work/close the site at any time
  - Temporary works supervisors
  - Fire wardens
  - First aiders
  - Operatives associated with lifting operations
  - Sufficient site supervisors for all sub-contractor staff
  - Plant/machinery operatives where their input is required to move materials/waste
- Remove access ladders to scaffolds.
- Prevent access to height through incomplete buildings using temporary "boarding" etc.
- Barrier edges of trenches/excavations etc.

NB - This list is not exhaustive and other measures may also be required for specific risks on your site. The main/principal contractor and relevant H&S advisor / competent person should also be consulted to confirm measures are sufficient.
2.3  **During hibernation**

When the site ceases operation until re-awakening, consider the following:

- Does anyone need access to the site / through the site to inspect / maintain e.g. statutory undertakers / telecoms engineers / environmental agency etc.? Do neighbours have access easements/over-sailing rights? If so how will this be managed safely?
- Security and interim inspections: to check that the site has not been broken into / vandalised – where the latter check that there is no environmental / safety impact
- Interim inspections: Scaffolding / cofferdams / temporary works / portable appliance testing expiry / temporary site electrical power supplies.
- Maintain some minimal lighting on-sites – it is a deterrent and stops “trespassers” from injuring themselves!
- Review the construction phase plan – what needs changing / updating to reflect current activity / proposed working?
- Keep contact with employees / sub-contractors to maintain the supply chain and make sure that they are kept aware of information relating to the re-awakening of sites
- Insurance company requirements – may need be amended if a site is unattended

2.4  **Re-awakening: returning to work**

When the restrictions associated with COVID-19 begin to be lifted and/or site operations are due to re-commence after a period of hibernation, we recommend that the client ensures the following activities are carried out in good time:

- Conduct a thorough site inspection before allowing employees/sub-contractors to return to work to update the site plan: allowing set down areas for materials, traffic/pedestrian segregation for an increase in traffic on site etc.
- If the site formed part of a temporary fire escape route for an adjacent building and/or is part of a building refurbishment/extension/part of a building in beneficial occupation – make sure that fire escape routes (if changed for site hibernation) are still viable and communicate alternative arrangements
- Carry out inspections on all temporary works/plant/equipment/cranes/hoists/hand-railing on precast steps/edge protection and scaffold: update inspection logs
- Check the CPP and re-write the programme of works – check the sequencing as this will inform in what order the employees need to return to the site
- Conduct a full cleanse/sanitisation of all internal areas before opening up the site – replenishing washing/sanitising materials. Re-order portalooos / mobile toilets / hygiene facilities, etc., if required
- Ensure sufficient stocks of PPE/RPE and hand cleaning materials
- Communicate with all stakeholders and employees to advise when the site will re-open – so that they can communicate the same to their sub-contractors and others affected by the operations. Tell them how they must return, what the arrangements are and for site operatives to bring their own prepared food wherever possible
- Check that safety critical staff are sufficient for the numbers returning – fire wardens, first aiders, site supervision, temporary works supervisors, banksmen, slingers, spotters, etc.
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- Where any sub-contractors are unable to return, mobilise procurement to find and assess a suitable replacement from your supply chain but make sure you advise the client of the substitution. Induct/secure permits/temporary passes ahead of their coming to site if possible, to save time: this can then be a shortened induction when they arrive.
- Re-induct everyone – if this can be done online this will speed up mobilisation.
- Use a noticeboard(s) to communicate ongoing emerging risks as people will need re-orientating back into the work environment and use toolbox talks to underline the high risk activities that will be taking place.
- Establish set down areas for pre-ordered materials especially long lead items and modular/prefabricated units.
- Check that activities like asbestos removal/the disposal of special/contaminated waste etc. can still continue, and check carrier’s licences (for waste) are still in date.
- Arrange for the resumption of skip collections.
- Resume regime inspections for planning/opening up/temporary works etc. to include external inspections from approved inspectors, third party H&S inspectors acting on behalf of the client, statutory undertakers, agencies which were due to carry out surveys but were told to suspend survey works etc.
- Check electrical tools to see if they require portable appliance testing (PAT).
- Check employee and subcontractor qualification tickets/cards (e.g. CSCS / White Card) are still in date.
- Check subcontractors insurances are still in date.
- Revisit the CPP and risk assessments to make sure that they capture safe systems of work across the site.
- Advise all relevant stakeholders that design risk meetings need to be re-started.
- NB: Once activities recommence on site, and until the lifting of COVID-19 guidance by the relevant regulatory body, the items listed in section 2.1 Safe operation of sites of this guidance note, need to then be applied.
3 Construction site hibernation and re-awakening: further services

Should you require further support, Turner & Townsend can offer a range of services to clients in respect of safe operation, stand down, hibernation, and/or re-awakening of sites, including:

- Advice on safe operation of sites remaining open to comply with COVID-19 restrictions
- Physical site inspections:
  a. Restricted - from outside the site on observed working practices [to include site access/egress] and production of a short report
  b. Intrusive - full inspection inside the site, producing an action report
  c. Risk assessment / method statement (RAMS) review for subcontractors carrying out high risk activities
- Development of a focused site inspection tool for use on hibernation and/or re-awakening
- Review of contractor H&S / construction safety planning and documents, RAMS and inductions for re-awakening
- Delivery of IOSH/APS accredited CDM awareness and/or other H&S training / development sessions for client/project teams and or contractors - particularly those with a design responsibility. These can be delivered face to face or via virtual classrooms.

4 SHEQ Helpdesk

We also offer a free helpdesk email service to answer any of our clients’ safety, health, environmental and quality concerns in relation to safe operation, hibernation and re-awakening of sites during COVID 19 restrictions. Our SHEQ Helpdesk is operated by a team of highly experienced SHEQ specialists. They will guide you through your options and support you to navigate through COVID-19 and its SHEQ impacts. We offer our clients up to one hour of free advice on any SHEQ problem relating to COVID-19 issues. For further information or queries please contact our SHEQ Helpdesk at: sheqhelpdesk@turntown.com

(NB: This is currently only operating as an English language service)

About Turner & Townsend

Turner & Townsend is an independent professional services company specialising in programme management, project management, cost management and advisory services across the real estate, infrastructure and natural resources sectors.

With 110 offices in 45 countries, we draw on our extensive global and industry experience to manage risk while maximising value and performance during the construction and operation of our clients’ assets.

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For further information on any of our services visit our website:

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