

SOP V11

Construction
Sector
C-19 Pandemic
**Standard
Operating
Procedures**

Version 11: 28th February 2022

(Users should refer to CIF website to ensure they are referring to the most current edition)

0. Abstract

The CIF Safety and Health Subcommittee developed this document mindful of current public health advice and it serves as a guide for the management of COVID-19 on a construction site at this point in the pandemic. The actions set out in this document should be implemented in tandem with a Construction Stage Health and Safety Plan and site-specific knowledge. The purpose of this document is to protect workers, their families and the community, whilst also recognising the need to protect livelihoods.

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1. Introduction

This version of the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was developed by the CIF Safety and Health Subcommittee to reflect the latest public health guidance for COVID-19, the Government's 'Transitional Protocol - Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19' and recent Government announcements.

As of 28th February 2022, public health advice reflects a move towards 'personal choice and responsibility' in addressing the risk of getting and/or spreading COVID-19.



The advice of government is that individuals should "*continue to manage risk for yourself and others who are more vulnerable. You can do this by wearing masks, physical distancing and avoiding crowds as well as maintaining basic hand and respiratory hygiene.*" Refer to: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d57d6-public-health-measures-coming-into-place-on-28-february/>

At this stage of the pandemic, the CIF would encourage all in construction to continue to:

- a) Risk assess the appropriate control measures for COVID-19
- b) Maintain basic hand and respiratory hygiene
- c) Avail of vaccinations and boosters against COVID-19
- d) Self-isolate, if advised by public health
- e) Support the role of the Site Safety Representative / Lead Worker Representative and the COVID-19 Compliance Officer.

A suite of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has been provided, which I would encourage you to review, in conjunction with official public health guidance: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

Thank you,

Frank Kelly

Chair, CIF Safety and Health Committee

2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Members should remember that the following answers are given in good faith and based on the information available at the current time.

1) What is the latest advice from government / public health for COVID-19?

Refer to the following webpages:

- HSE COVID-19 – <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>
- HSE for Contact Tracing – <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/>
- Government’s Transitional Protocol: Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 – <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/Publications/Transitional-Protocol-COVID-19.html>
- Department of Health; Department of the Taoiseach - <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>

2) Do we need to continue with mask / face covering wearing?

Refer to Section 3 - Key Control Measures for full details. From Monday, 28th February, the advice of government is that face masks will no longer be mandatory but should be worn when (a) on public transport, or (b) in healthcare settings.

The approach endorsed by the CIF for construction sites is that the general wearing of face masks / face coverings will not be required, unless it has been determined as a requirement from a site or task-specific risk assessment, or if dictated by site rules.

Should an individual prefer to continue to wear a face mask / face covering, this is at their discretion and is to be supported, unless it conflicts with a local risk assessment (e.g. where the wearing of PPE takes precedence).

3) Do we need to continue with social distancing?

Social distancing is still recognised as a tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19. Whilst social distancing is no longer mandated by government, local arrangements or site rules may apply and should be adhered to. At present, workers are encouraged to take personal responsibility and ensure social distancing at work, in public places, when travelling and in their daily lives, to limit their potential exposure to the virus.

4) Do we need to maintain hygiene stations and encourage hand washing etc?

Good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette remain good practice to prevent transmission of the virus. It is recommended that these facilities remain until further notice.

5) Can welfare facilities return to normal arrangements / occupancy levels?

Yes – however, a local risk assessment should determine the appropriate measures to be followed, mindful of ventilation arrangements. Where practicable, seek to avoid the unnecessary congregating of multiple persons in close proximity. As we know, COVID-19 is mainly spread through the air in drops of liquid that comes from the nose / mouth of an infected person; poor ventilation aids this transmission. It is recommended that internal areas where people congregate should be adequately ventilated.

6) Do we need to maintain the cleaning regime?

Yes – it is recommended that a good hygiene regime should remain for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Frequency of cleaning could be reviewed based on local circumstances.

7) Can workers return to using public transport for getting to / from work?

Yes – the use of public transport to get to / from work can be encouraged along with compliance with the corresponding public health advice.

8) Can workers carpool?

Yes – recommendations as per public transport -for personal hygiene. Refer to the full information on travel to / from work, as outlined in Section 7 of this SOP.

9) Do we need to keep a list of recent contacts for contact tracing?

Site attendance sheets should be adequate at this time but note that in the event of a positive case being identified on site, contact tracing records would be useful (if not explicitly required). Individuals will be expected to take responsibility for identifying their close contacts, in the event of an outbreak.

10) Are Safe Pass cards that expired from March 2020 still valid?

Legislation was introduced in April 2020, that extended the validity of Safe Pass cards that expired after 1st March 2020, in recognition of the pandemic. Revised legislation was introduced on 13th October 2021, which allows for cards to be renewed within the following timeframes:

- Cards that expired between March 2020 – October 2020 will be deemed to be valid for 5 years and 11 months
- Cards that expired between 1st November 2020, and the date of coming into operation of this new legislation, will be valid for 5 years and 2 months.

11) Do we still require a C19 Compliance Officer & Lead Worker?

Yes - the virus has not been totally eradicated and therefore it is recommended to maintain the role but revise the responsibilities in line with the de-escalation and the revised CIF C19 SOP, of the C19 requirements at that time.

3. Key Control Measures

A combination of good personal hygiene and management of social distancing can continue to protect from infection. As public health advice and interventions are constantly changing due to new and emerging evidence, and the implementation of public health interventions such as the vaccination programme, employers and workers should ensure that they keep up to date with and follow the current public health advice available:

- <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/>
- <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/>

If you have symptoms of COVID-19

COVID-19 symptoms may be similar to that of a cold, flu or hay fever. Visit the HSE webpage for the latest public health advice: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/> or freephone HSE Live: **1800 700**.

Current arrangements for testing for COVID-19 depend on your circumstances:

Who you are?	Testing requirement
If you are aged 55 years and older AND not boosted	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Self-isolate; 2. Get a PCR test; 3. Follow public health advice following test result.
If you have a high-risk medical condition	
If you are immunocompromised	
If you live in the same household as a person who is immunocompromised	
If you provide care or support for a person you know to be immunocompromised	
If you are pregnant	
All other persons!	No test is required. Self-isolate until 48 hours after symptoms resolve.

Close Contacts

If you are a close contact and do not have symptoms of COVID-19, no test is required. Self-isolate if symptoms develop.

Follow public health advice, available at: <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/contact-tracing/close-contact/>

Vaccinations

Vaccination has been shown to be the best protection from the health impacts of the COVID-19 virus. It is recommended that employers continue to promote vaccinations against the virus. Visit: <https://www2.hse.ie/screening-and-vaccinations/covid-19-vaccine/>

International Travel

Arrangements for international travel are subject to change. For the most up-to-date information on international travel, visit the webpage of the Department of Foreign Affairs: <https://www.dfa.ie/travel/travel-advice/coronavirus/> or the Government of Ireland's COVID-19 Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/75d92-covid-19-travel-advice/>

Hand Hygiene

Good hand hygiene continues to be a key control measure in preventing infection; therefore, it is recommended to continue promotion of good hand hygiene and for provision of sufficient and maintained facilities to allow this to happen.

Social Distancing

Social distancing is still recognised as a tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19; whilst it is no longer mandated by government, local arrangements or site rules may apply and should be adhered to. Risk assessments and method statements for all work onsite should address the risk of COVID-19 and the associated control measures required. Emphasis will be required on welfare facilities, meeting areas, and any congested areas of work.

The current advice of government is to *“continue to manage risk for yourself and others who are more vulnerable. You can do this by wearing masks, physical distancing and avoiding crowds as well as maintaining basic hand and respiratory hygiene.”* Refer to:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d57d6-public-health-measures-coming-into-place-on-28-february/>

Cough Etiquette / Respiratory Hygiene

Promotion of good cough etiquette / respiratory hygiene is still recommended. Encourage people to cough / sneeze into their sleeve or elbow, to avoid spitting and to dispose of used tissues appropriately.

Face Covering / Mask

From Monday, 28th February, face masks are no longer mandatory, but you should still wear masks when (a) on public transport, or (b) in healthcare settings.

The approach endorsed by the CIF is that the general wearing of face masks / face coverings on construction sites will not be required, unless it has been determined as a requirement from a site or task-specific risk assessment, or if dictated by site rules.

Employers should continue to support and facilitate the use of face masks by workers who may wish to continue to use them, except where it conflicts with a local risk assessment (e.g.

where the wearing of PPE takes precedence). Wearing a face mask / covering reduces the spread of COVID-19 in the community. It helps to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets from people infected with COVID-19. This helps to stop people who do not know they have the virus from spreading it to others. If face masks / coverings are worn, they should be clean and they should not be shared or handled by other colleagues.

Testing

The CIF and the Trade Union Federation signed an agreement in February 2021 to ensure worker safety on site; this agreement is industry-specific and facilitates COVID-19 testing (temperature, PCR testing and antigen testing) provided by employers.

Ventilation

Provision of adequate ventilation is an important consideration for preventing the spread of COVID-19. It is important to maximise ventilation in areas where people are in close contact (e.g. in meeting rooms / canteens). While large droplets containing the virus will settle onto the surrounding surfaces within seconds, smaller particles can stay suspended for longer. Dilution of indoor air by opening windows and doors or using mechanical ventilation systems can lower the airborne concentration and remove these smaller particles from the air.

Note 1: The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) has produced a series of checklists and templates covering ventilation, rapid antigen testing and returning to the office; see: [https://www.hsa.ie/enq/topics/covid-19 coronavirus information and resources/](https://www.hsa.ie/enq/topics/covid-19_coronavirus_information_and_resources/)

Note 2: The HSE has developed guidance on non-healthcare building ventilation during COVID-19; see: <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/quidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolquidance/buildingsandfacilitiesguidance/ventilationguidance/>

4. Role of the Client

The construction industry is largely a service industry. Contractors work for clients under a construction contract. In most instances, compliance with these Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) involves changes to the schedule or delivery programme for construction projects. Therefore, the implementation of these SOP's must have the support of the client and be implemented in accordance with the necessary contractual instructions from clients.

A contractor cannot operate unilaterally; each site and project are unique in terms of its design and the tasks associated with its construction. Clients must therefore accept that adapting and complying with the good practice illustrated in this SOP has productivity and cost implications. It is therefore recommended that a risk assessment is conducted by the client and contractor to ensure that the project can operate safely, that work programmes are agreed and/or any necessary contractual instructions are issued by the client to facilitate compliance with these SOP's. On certain projects where the client and the builder are the

same entity (such as housing projects) it is still recommended that a risk assessment is conducted before implementing these SOP's.

5. Health and Safety Documentation

Project health and safety documentation should be reviewed to ensure that the documentation is aligned with the measures as outlined in this 'Construction Sector C-19 Pandemic SOP' (V.11) and the Government's '*Transitional Protocol – Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19*', general / standard health and safety requirements, considering the constraints of COVID-19.

Safety Statement

It is advised that contractors continue to review their safety statement and associated risk assessments considering COVID-19.

Risk Assessments / Method Statement (RAMS)

Risk assessments and method statements for all work onsite should address the risk of COVID-19 and the associated control measures required. Emphasis will be required on welfare facilities, meeting areas, and any congested areas of work.

6. Site Management

Responsibilities of Site Management for COVID-19

Site management must risk assess and manage safety and health hazards in the workplace. In the context of the application of the requirements of this C-19 SOP, responsibilities include managing and instructing site workers on the various control measures and compliance. This SOP identifies a few key management responsibilities during the implementation of this Plan. These responsibilities are elucidated hereafter.

Pre-Planning for Work

Site management are responsible for ensuring that all personnel on site, including sub-contractor management/staff have been made aware of the specific requirements of the site-specific Construction Stage Health and Safety Plan, where applicable.

On-Site

Site management responsibility includes assessing various work scenarios to ensure that the key requirements such as worker distancing and hygiene / PPE controls are being implemented. This may involve discussions with the client and the PSDP. It will involve conducting regular site walks and inspections. Continuity of work crews should continue to be encouraged. Experience has shown that keeping workers in 'pods' can assist in reducing virus transfer and reduce possible contacts.

General Site Work Activities

- **Review work practices** - mindful of close working arrangements. Coach site personnel to self-assess their task for social distancing and transmission points.
- **Supervise or mentor** - to specifically monitor for potential transmission points, congested areas and hygiene etiquette.

7. Travel to / from Work

Commuters should follow public health advice when using public transport.

When travelling in private / company vehicles, consider means to minimise your risk of contracting COVID-19 (e.g. use of face masks, hand sanitizer, and open the windows). Ideally, sit as far apart as the vehicle allows.

Note 3: *Workers should not enter a work vehicle with others, or attend work, if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.*

Good hygiene continues to be a cornerstone of prevention of transmission of the virus. General guidance for minimising the potential transmission of COVID-19 includes:

- Workers using public transport should follow the current public health advice
- It is advisable to limit the 'churn' of people travelling together (i.e. try to ensure the same crew members travel and work together day after day and where possible, keep them working in a pod)
- Keep windows at least partially open
- Where there is more than one person in the vehicle, occupants should consider wearing a face covering based on their assessment
- If availing of public transport, sit down to minimise contact with frequently touched surfaces, handles, roof straps, isolation bars and wear a face covering if you feel it is necessary
- Carry hand sanitiser (at least 60% alcohol) and use it regularly.

8. Prevention of Cross Contamination

Site Entry

The potential for cross contamination at work is higher at site entry / exit points and where there are high levels of surface contact points such as in welfare areas, site walkways, stairs access etc. The following are recommended controls measures at access points to all construction sites:

- Continue to record details of entrants to site
- Sanitising stations in position at all site entry points
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control and delivery areas (e.g. scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets, desks), particularly during peak flow times

- Assess the number of people in attendance at site inductions and consider holding them outdoors or in well ventilated spaces
- Persons entering site should be directed to wash their hands
- Touch points should be minimised with a 'handsfree' approach where possible.

Close Working

Where close working is required, a risk assessment should evaluate appropriate control measures for COVID-19. Additional safety precautions may be advised; consider the following:

- Confirmation that no worker has symptoms of COVID-19 and that it is impracticable to avoid close contact work
- Consider the appropriate combination of PPE (e.g. face-shield / mask (surgical type/FFP3/FFP2/other), eye protection)
- All PPE is present as per the RAMS / Risk Assessment (e.g. full-face shield etc.).

Office Arrangements

- A decision on whether face coverings should be worn should be based on local risk assessment and in-keeping with company policies
- Offices should be regularly ventilated by opening windows
- Use I.T software to support online meetings where appropriate
- Keep workstation surfaces clear and wipe with disinfectant regularly
- Hand sanitizers should be made available at main entry and exit points
- Keep main doors open where possible to reduce persons touching door handles etc.
- Review cleaning regimes.

Meetings

Where appropriate, conduct meetings using online remote means. Where face-to-face meetings are necessary, increase ventilation (e.g. open windows). Experience has shown that the sharing of IT equipment at meetings contributes to transmission of the virus. Eliminate where possible; if not, sanitise the equipment between users. In summary, if face-to-face meetings are required:

- Ventilate the room
- Try to avoid close working, where practicable, and
- Individuals to consider the wearing of face masks / coverings.

Welfare Facilities / Drying Rooms

Continue to implement appropriate COVID-19 hygiene regime, including:

- The avoidance of crowded spaces
- Ensure soap and hand washing pictorial guides provided for washing hands are clearly visual and in a form manner and language understand for all
- Ensuring appropriate cleaning regimes for toilet facilities (particularly for door handles, locks and the toilet flush handle)
- Ensure regular cleaning of drying rooms.

Canteens and Eating Arrangements

The following is suggested to assist in reducing the likelihood of transmission:

- All personnel should be encouraged to wash their hands before eating
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available
- The avoidance of crowded spaces
- Tables should be clear when finished eating
- All areas used for eating must be thoroughly cleaned (at least daily).

9. C-19 Compliance Officer / Lead Worker Representative

This section is intended to outline the role and duties of a COVID-19 Compliance Officer ('C-19 Compliance Officer'), which is still endorsed for site management of COVID-19. Projects should also facilitate the selection of at least one Site Safety Representative / Lead Worker Representative to assist with ensuring that Covid-19 measures are strictly adhered to.

Role of a C-19 Compliance Officer

- The role of a C-19 Compliance Officer should continue to be the monitoring of daily site activities to ensure hygiene and other site rules for COVID-19, as appropriate
- These key personnel should be clearly identifiable onsite with a high-viz vest noting C-19 Compliance Officer. The class of high-viz provided should be appropriate to the location that the worker will be working - readers should consult ISO 20471:2013+A1:2016
- The C-19 Compliance Officer should be familiar with the content of this document and be advised of changing advice, where it impacts the role.

Note 4: *The role of the Lead Workers Representative is outlined in the Government's 'Transitional Protocol - Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of C-19':* <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63ba6-transitional-protocol-good-practice-guidance-for-continuing-to-prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19/>

Note 5: *Free, online training for the Lead Worker Representative is available at:* https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/covid-19/hsa_return_to_work_safely_online_courses/hsa_return_to_work_safely_online_courses.html

10. COVID-19 Suspect / Confirmed Cases

Suspect COVID-19 Case at Work

Refer to the HSE webpage: [HSE Public Health Advice for Construction Sector.pdf \(hpsc.ie\)](#)

Return to Work

An individual will be classified as either a suspected or confirmed case, based on HSE decision to test / outcome of test. They must also notify their line manager / employer.

11. First Aid Responder Guidance

The greatest element of risk for a First Aid Responder is transfer of the virus to the mucous membranes by contact of contaminated hands (including contaminated gloved hands) with the eyes, nose or mouth. The key interventions to manage this risk are to minimise hand contamination, avoid touching your face and clean your hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand gel. This risk is managed by use of appropriate PPE (mask and eye protection) and by providing the ill person with a mask to cover their nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing (respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette).

Key Control Measures:

- Standard infection control precautions to be applied when responding to any first aid incident in the workplace. Hand washing with warm water and soap or an alcohol-based hand gel must be performed before and after providing any first aid treatment.
- Any person presenting with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should be treated as a suspected case. In such cases, move individual to a first aid room / isolated room to minimise risk of infection to others.
- Only one First Aid Responder to provide support/treatment, where practicable.
- Additional PPE (enclosed eye protection, and FFP3 mask if available) should be worn by First Aid Responders when responding to all first aid incidents where close contact cannot be avoided. Please also have a mask available to give to the person if they are displaying symptoms consistent with COVID-19 to limit droplet dispersion.
- When dealing with a person with minor injuries (e.g. cuts, abrasions, minor burns), and where practicable, a First Aid Responder should avoid close contact and advise the injured party what steps to take in treating their injury.
- No reusable equipment should be returned to service without being cleaned/disinfected appropriately.

PPE Requirements

The following PPE must be available for responding to first aid incidents:

- Disposable gloves (nitrile/latex)
- FFP3 or FFP2 or other face coverings that provide suitable protection
- Disposable plastic aprons
- Enclosed eye protection.

12. Further Information

- Government's 'Transitional Protocol - Good Practice Guidance for Continuing to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19': <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63ba6-transitional-protocol-good-practice-guidance-for-continuing-to-prevent-the-spread-of-covid-19/>
- Government - <https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/c36c85-covid-19-coronavirus/>
- The Health Service Executive and Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)
 - HSElive - Tel: 1800 700 700
 - www.hse.ie
 - www.hpsc.ie
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment COVID-19 Business Support Call Centre - for information on the supports available to businesses impacted by COVID-19. Tel: 01 631 2002 / Email: infobusinesssupport@enterprise.gov.ie

CIF Headquarters

Construction House
Canal Road
Dublin 6

Phone 01 406 6000
Email info@cif.ie

CIF Cork

Construction House
4 Eastgate Avenue
Little Island
Cork

Phone 021 435 1410
Email cifcork@cif.ie

CIF Galway

Construction House
8 Montpelier Terrace
The Crescent
Galway

Phone 091 502680
Email cifgalway@cif.ie

www.cif.ie
[@CIF_Ireland](#)