

COVID-19: RE-STARTING YOUR RETAIL BUSINESS



Re-starting your business after a temporary shutdown or reduction in operations can present specific hazards, which if not planned or managed properly, may result in damage, injury, legal action and further disruption to your business.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Where activities are either scaled up or scaled down compared to the pre-shutdown period, there can be increased risk of:

- fire / explosion
- machinery / plant damage or breakdown
- injury.

These may be caused by a variety of factors including delayed maintenance cycles, frequent start up and shut down procedures, changes in procurement and human factors.

Your business operations and activities may need to adapt due to keeping an increased level of stock, introducing different processes or procedures, changes

in shift patterns and staffing etc. Where these changes introduce new hazards or exposures, risk management measures, should all be re-assessed and adapted. This may include:

- safe systems of work / working procedures
- training
- cleaning / disinfection / sanitisation
- fire and security protection system.

If you've furloughed staff, you'll need to consider the timeframe agreed for returning to the workplace, so allow for this in planning arrangements.

If you're unable to create a safe working environment on site, those operations should be postponed until corrective measures can be put in place.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The following provides a checklist of key considerations to safely recommence your retail operations:

- **Observe and enforce COVID-19 workplace restrictions** in line with government regulations and guidance, including those relevant to:
 - travel to work
 - driving at work
 - welfare provision
 - cleaning / disinfection / sanitisation
 - social distancing
 - floor markings
 - digital rather than paper use
 - personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - staggered working hours and breaks.

Where the regulations and guidance can't be met, work activities should either be revised to achieve them or stopped altogether. Guidance is available from:

- **UK Government**, including **COVID Secure guidance** specific to Construction and other outdoor work
- **Public Health England**
- **Health Protection Scotland**
- **Public Health Wales**
- **Health and Safety Executive (HSE).**



- **Review existing risk assessments and actions** including safe systems of work / working procedures to check they're relevant to your business' operation and that you're taking all the appropriate measures to ensure a safe working environment. This will include, but isn't limited to:

- o any employees who may be required to work offsite
- o customers.

Where your business operations and activities are required to change, plans should be updated and careful consideration given to whether:

- new risk assessments should be completed and the results and consequent actions shared with your employees (including any temporary and agency personnel) and any visitors, contractors and other occupants or users where premises are shared
- fire, security and COVID-19 specific precautions are in your review, implementing changes and / or enhancements where necessary to maintain an appropriate level of protection.

Specific considerations may include:

- **Customers**

- o reviewing opening / closing procedures including designated time slots for more vulnerable customers
- o online booking of time slots for customers to shop at your premises
- o limiting the number of entry and exit points, and having separate entry and exit points if possible
- o limiting the number of customers allowed within the premises at any time
- o providing a customer-facing social distancing coordinator near entry points to highlight the social distancing requirements and control the numbers entering the premises at any one time. It may be appropriate for this coordinator to have a security remit and be SIA registered



- o providing clear signage outside and inside of the premises to explain the social distancing measures that customers should follow
- o limiting customer contact with merchandise where practical, for example using protected displays and signage to remind customers of the implications of picking up and putting down merchandise ('only touch what you intend to purchase' signage for example)
- o providing markings and signage to assist with queue spacing requirements both inside and outside of the premises, taking into account traffic management and pedestrian segregation
- o encouraging customers to shop / attend the premises alone, if practical
- o providing appropriately marked one-way systems to help maintain social distancing
- o making regular in-store announcements reminding customers of social distancing and hygiene expectations
- o encouraging cashless purchases
- o using tools such as social media, websites and apps to inform customers of policies and procedures relevant to social distancing, hygiene etc., including specific reference to

- o any of the usual services not available
- o providing a no-contact returns procedure
- o encouraging drivers to stay in their vehicles where this doesn't compromise their safety and existing safe working practice (e.g. prevention of drive-aways).

- **Cleaning**

- o providing cleaning stations at entrance and exit points and other strategic locations with signage to remind customers and employees of the importance of washing hands and hygiene
- o cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation procedures for trolleys and baskets used by customers, and trolleys / cages used by employees for carrying stock
- o regular cleaning of touch points including door handles, lift buttons, keypads, stair and escalator handrails etc.

- **Buildings and working practices**

- o liaising with nearby / proximate premises to assist with possible shared parking and queue spacing areas
- o installing physical barriers / screens at till / checkout etc. areas. Barriers must be subject to appropriate cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation
- o closing some till / checkout points to assist with social distancing, this being particularly relevant where till / checkout points are close together
- o limiting numbers (to one at a time) using lifts and limiting escalator use
- o re-stocking outside of operating hours to reduce congestion within retail / sales areas





- o removing promotional stands to reduce the potential for customers accumulating in specific areas
- o closing changing room areas unless you can have an employee oversee social distancing arrangements
- o removing customer seating
- o removing or closing (should be barriered off) any children's play equipment, play areas or crèche areas for example
- o stopping any other services where direct interaction could be a feature, for example nail-bars, make-up application, personnel shoppers, packing etc.
- o closing cafés and restaurants subject to the provision of additional guidance and advice from government and other relevant trade bodies
- o ensuring regular rotation of high-touch stock / merchandise
- o establishing pick-up and drop-off collection points to reduce the need to pass products from hand-to-hand
- o removing/ restricting of touch points in staff areas where practical i.e. vending machines and other canteen equipment for general employee use
- o establishing procedures and safe systems of work specific to machinery interventions such as cleaning, servicing, maintenance and repair
- o continued support (practical and well-being) for any employees who continue to work from home.

- **Deliveries and vehicles**

- o careful and clear communication with suppliers specific to goods-in delivery arrangements, including timings, avoiding contact and arrangements for social distancing
- o scheduling goods-in deliveries to avoid the potential for overcrowding in deliveries areas and interaction with customers
- o considering the potential for non-contact goods-in deliveries
- o limiting those involved in loading and unloading, and where more than one person is needed, using the same pairs of people
- o establishing safe working procedures for customer deliveries and / or click and collect services, where offered, with considerations relevant to online ordering, social distancing, protective equipment, face coverings, cleaning, disinfection, sanitisation (including vehicles) and hygiene clearly key.
- o providing adequate and suitable welfare facilities for employees and visiting drivers, including areas for safely changing and storing clothing and personal protective equipment (where overalls and other personal protective equipment are provided, laundry arrangements and provision should be specifically reviewed).

Further support can be found on our [health & safety risk assessment](#), [safe systems of work](#), [fire risk assessment](#) and [cyber security](#) pages.

- **Develop and carry out enhanced workplace cleaning, disinfection and sanitisation programmes** both pre and post re-opening. Pay particular attention to communal areas and touchpoints such as washing facilities, toilet flush and seats, door handles and push plates, trolleys (customer and stock), baskets, stock cages, hand rails, office equipment, food preparation areas, company vehicles, forklift trucks, pallet trucks etc. Record cleaning and outline ongoing expectations / requirements.

If you're introducing alcohol-based hand sanitisers, remember they're flammable. Update your fire risk assessment, to keep your premises and people safe, ensure storage and use is clear of ignition sources (for example, electrical equipment, hot surfaces, smoking areas etc.) and ideally store within purpose designed flammable liquid cabinets, or otherwise, steel cabinets. Further support can be found on our [storage and use of flammable / explosive materials](#) page.

- **Undertake a thorough inspection of your site** including:

- o all buildings (interior and exterior)
- o boundary fences
- o gates
- o utility services (including water systems and any other potential sources of legionella, power facilities, ventilation / air conditioning systems, and where provided, refrigeration plant)
- o machinery / plant
- o stock
- o storage arrangements
- o any hazardous operations, emergency backup systems and safety equipment to establish and correct any unsafe or abnormal conditions, such as damage, maintenance issues, leaks, faulty safety and emergency systems, improper housekeeping or storage, signs of vandalism or theft etc.

Our [equipment checklist](#) may assist you.

- **Review emergency response procedures** to verify:

- o they're up-to-date
- o adequate coverage for assigned positions on all shifts, including first aiders and fire marshals for example.

Further support can be found on our [emergency procedures](#) page.

- **Plan sufficient time to recommission previously shutdown machinery / plant and processes** in line with all standard operating procedures (SOPs) and manufacturers' guidelines.

- **Complete and reinstate any inspection, testing and maintenance procedures** including those of a statutory nature that may have lapsed since the shutdown. This could include utility services, machinery / plant (for example, air receivers and compressors, vehicle lifting equipment and forklift trucks), emergency systems, storage racking, vehicles, adequacy / safety of storage racking, loading / unloading equipment and any plant and machinery specific to waste management / control, such as waste compactors.

Competent persons should verify that all protection / detection systems, including fire sprinkler / suppression systems, fire pumps, water supplies, fire alarm systems, intruder alarm systems, CCTV, access control etc. are in service and functioning correctly.

Further support can be found in our [equipment checklist](#), [general-manufacturing](#) and [forklift truck pre-use checks](#) pages and external guidance provided by the [HSE](#).

- **Ensure work competence and capability of employees** for the activities to be carried out checking all:
 - o possess the necessary and appropriate skills
 - o have received appropriate information, instruction and training, and hold the correct and up-to-date certificates and licenses, where required.

Additional training programmes and / or certification, instruction, information and supervision may be required where there is an insufficient number of competent personnel with regard to your return-to-work-policy (where in place). This can help provide structure and a framework to ensure your personnel are fit for work and

consider issues such as mental health, wellbeing and physical fitness.

In reviewing the training arrangements and competency requirements, specific consideration should be given to the following:

- **Availability and responsibilities of key personnel**
 - o senior managers
 - o Human Resources and Health, Safety & Environmental personnel
 - o premises / store managers
 - o department managers / supervisors
 - o maintenance personnel
 - o appropriately qualified technicians and plant / machinery operators
 - o cleaning personnel (internal and externally appointed contractors)
 - o first aiders
 - o fire marshals.
- **Formal induction / re-induction**
 - o specific expectations and controls relating to COVID-19 and any amendment to rules
 - o consider the specific requirements of any vulnerable workers (young persons, new and expectant mothers, any groups identified as being at risk of severe illness as a result of COVID-19).
- **Other training needs**
 - o expired tickets, certificates and interim measures - a number of trade organisations have sites indicating interim arrangements where training may have expired
 - o conflict resolution / management training to address potential customer challenges in implementing COVID -19 measures
 - o familiarisation (site and plant for example) to be specifically considered, with returning furloughed employees and operatives potentially not having operated plant or been in a site environment for a significant period of time.
- **Training delivery**
 - o requirements for social and physical distancing for example, are likely to impact the practicalities of training

delivery, including induction and toolbox talks. This should be considered as part of the risk assessment process, including available facilities, numbers that can be safely accommodated, duration, potential barriers to communication etc.

Further support can be found on our [training](#) page.

- **Consider how and when to communicate to employees** regarding re-opening and re-starting procedures and associated expectations:
 - o can electronic / remote platforms be used to release initial communications before re-opening?
 - o before activities start, should the first days of re-opening be used to communicate expectations, deliver training, deal with maintenance / inspection issues, and the practicalities of managing challenges relating to social and physical distancing?
 - o use the first days to integrate employees back into their job role and activities. Consider the potential impacts of a significant period of time away from work, with some employees likely to benefit from a gradual / phased reintroduction.
- **Review your business continuity plan** including:
 - o supply chain resilience (stock, machinery and equipment parts and components and IT systems of software, for example)
 - o implementation and mitigation measures, to reflect any changes to your business operation and lessons learned from the temporary shutdown.

Visit our [business continuity](#) page for further support.

- **Further information and support is available:**
 - o Allianz UK's [risk management portal](#) and [Coronavirus resource hub](#)