

Prepared on: 6th January 2021
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Reviewed by: Neil Giddens, employee-nominated H&S Representative

Background

Since February 2020 there has been a global growing risk of Coronavirus (COVID-19), and SEP was ahead of most government guidelines in terms of mitigation actions, including:

- Communicating with employees and visitors on risks and mitigations.
- Daily wellness self-checks/self-isolation for ANY illness, whether suspected COVID-19 or otherwise.
- Implementing a higher frequency of cleaning of shared and high-touch items such as handles, switches, kitchen and toilet areas; although guidance later in 2020 determined that transmission through touch was less likely as long as hand-washing was maintained.
- The provision of hand sanitiser.
- Preventing access to non-employees and refusing to sign for deliveries.
- Office staff working from home where practical.
- Workshop staff on rotation to minimise on-site staffing, and in two 'bubble shifts' in order to minimise cross-transmission risk.

Since March 2020 there have been cycles of lockdown, tiered restrictions, releases and re-lockdown from 5th January 2021. A global vaccination programme is underway, but a new variant is sending transmission rates skywards. Economic support by way of a furlough scheme, is currently extended to April 2021.

Throughout the lockdown, SEP as a manufacturer of potentially life-saving devices has not been prevented from opening, but our staffing levels have been minimised predominantly to minimise risk but also sometimes due to lower customer demand.

As normal life and the economy try (and try again) to restart, we must continually consider how we can work and live in a safe and sustainable manner. New measures may need to be in place for several years.

- Changes to our business, organisation and working practices may be long-term or even permanent.
- Attention to our own safety, and that of our colleagues, is more critical than ever.
- Staff flexibility will be of growing importance.
- After building significant momentum, customer demand may struggle for some time; the long-term impact on construction, for instance, is unknown at this time.

Sources

In preparing this document, reference has been made to the following resources:

1. "OUR PLAN TO REBUILD: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy" (upd 24 Jul 20, Ref CP 239)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>
2. "Working safely during COVID-19 in factories, plants and warehouses" (upd 21 Dec 20)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>
3. "Working safely during COVID-19 in offices and contact centres" (upd 21 Dec 20)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>
4. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm>
5. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-2019.docx>

Summary

The above-listed documents contains lots of detailed information, which is not repeated in detail here, but it is considered helpful to summarise the key issues:

- Anyone who CAN work from home, SHOULD do so
- Workplaces that are ALLOWED to be open, SHOULD* do so
- Anyone who CANNOT work from home, SHOULD* go to work
- Anyone with SYMPTOMS should NOT leave home, and neither should anyone in the household

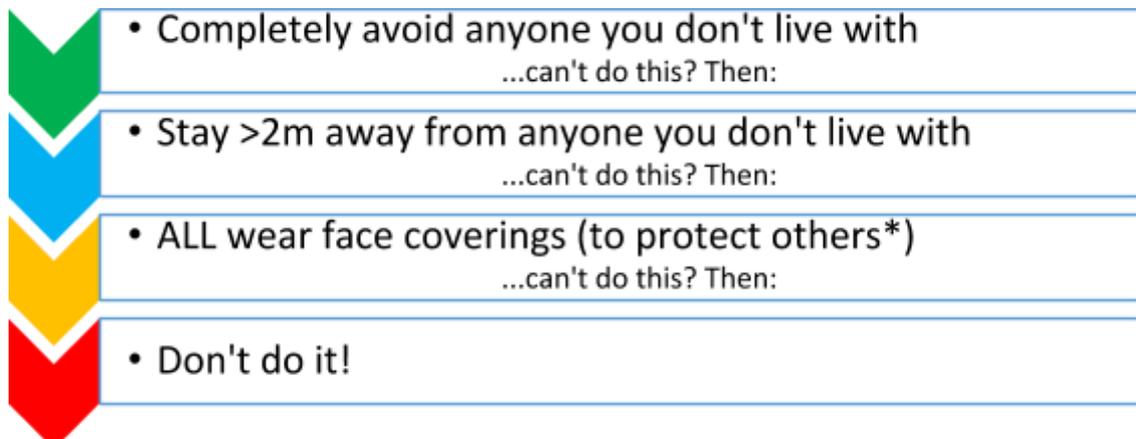
* subject to safe operation within the “COVID-19 Secure” Guidelines (see below)

There is an overriding principle, which many people seem to be missing, which is that everyone who *can* avoid movement and busy places *should do so*, in order that those who *cannot* avoid them are subject to lower transmission risk. This is not about different rules for different people, it’s about reducing overall risk.

SHOULD I GO TO WORK? ONLY if you can answer YES to ALL of these questions:



There is also an order of effectiveness in terms of trying to avoid transmission risks:

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- Completely avoid anyone you don't live with
...can't do this? Then:
 - Stay >2m away from anyone you don't live with
...can't do this? Then:
 - ALL wear face coverings (to protect others*)
...can't do this? Then:
 - Don't do it!

“COVID-19 Secure” Guidelines

As well as the ‘rules’ in the previous section, there are a number of evidence-based guidelines and principles which need to be followed. In the light of the new (late 2020) variant, these matters are crucial.

- **Keep distances:**
 - evidence shows that risk is increased by both proximity and duration of contact – if at least one of these can be avoided, the risk is lower;
 - outdoors and in well-ventilated areas, the risk is lower – a brief, even close, passage by someone outdoors is unlikely to lead to transmission;
 - avoid close face-to-face contact – workplaces should be side-to-side or even back-to-back.
- **Keep clean:** wash hands with soap (hand sanitiser is a secondary substitute), don’t touch face.
- **Keep the same contacts:** if teams/shifts are used in a workplace, keep them the same if possible to minimise the risk of any cross-transmission. Avoid crowded places.
- **Face coverings:** wear a face covering in an enclosed space where social distancing isn’t possible...this is most relevant for short periods indoors in crowded areas. IMPORTANT: the evidence shows that face coverings do not protect you, but may protect others.

SEP has a responsibility to provide as safe an environment as possible for its employees; SEP’s employees also have a responsibility to keep themselves – and their colleagues – as safe as possible by sticking to the guidelines and new working practices.

COVID-19 Risk Assessment (and Mitigations)

As an employer, SEP is responsible for carrying out a risk assessment in relation to Covid-19 (as we are, and have done, for many other risks ranging from slips and trips to the use of ladders and the lathe etc), and the carrying out actions which are determined necessary and appropriate to minimise risks for everybody.

The Managing Director takes these responsibilities extremely seriously, as he has done throughout the growing pandemic – failure to do everything possible could lead to lifelong harm for any or indeed all employees and the business itself.

The full Risk Assessment is available as a separate document.

Consultation, Concerns and Enquiries

Prior to publication of this document, all employees were consulted and their views, opinions and concerns accounted for.

Any employee having further concerns should firstly raise these with their nominated Employee H&S Representative named above, who will consider and then raise as appropriate with the Managing Director.

Any external parties having any questions or concerns should raise them directly with the Managing Director by email (info@saleengineering.co.uk) or by telephone (+44 161 428 1180).

If you are not satisfied with any response or action by the company, you may contact the HSE:

Telephone 0300 003 1647

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/>