



Coronavirus Response

Post-coronavirus start-up guidance: Property owners

Many companies will be returning to their business premises to resume operations for the first time in weeks since the Covid-19 restrictions came into force on 23rd March. Reopening a building that has been in full or partial shutdown can be challenging and needs to be planned, to resume activities and building services in a controlled and safe manner.

Property owners will be responsible for a varied range of building types from shopping centres, individual industrial units, industrial/business parks, office blocks, high street units etc., and the degree of direct control and responsibility you or your managing agent need to exercise will vary.

In addition to areas under your control, tenants will need to ensure they resume their operations safely. To assist, reference can also be made to our related documents on restarting operations, including specific guidance on ensuring sprinkler installations are operating as intended.

Due to the diversity of premises and business occupiers, each will need to be individually risk assessed to establish specific needs and the guidance given below covers some of the main areas to consider.

These guidelines do not override any existing policy conditions.

The fact that a business is deemed essential, or is permitted to operate, does not mean its legal obligations are in any way relaxed or reduced. Indeed, in the present climate the duties owed to employees and others are enhanced. All activities must only be undertaken in line with the current guidance issued by HM Government.

All applicable health & safety legislation and regulations remain fully in force, including but not limited to:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974.
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Workplace (Health, Safety & Welfare) Regulations 1992.
- Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order.

First and foremost, customer and employee safety are paramount – this includes your managing agents and tenants.





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Risk management measures

Activities: It is important that a review of your working activities is undertaken before restarting any work, as this will form part of your Covid-19 Compliance risk assessment. You must carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment; this means looking at working areas and activities to enable your employees to successfully distance themselves from customers and colleagues and work safely. It may not be appropriate to carry out certain activities as you normally would, and / or you may need to consider supplying PPE equipment to certain employees. Please see the latest Government and HSE advice for updates on appropriate precautions.

Please remember that if some activities cannot be carried out safely, they should not be undertaken at all.

You must reinduct your employees to ensure that they understand new restrictions, new rules and altered arrangements for using welfare facilities and you may need to operate out of hours and/or, introduce shift patterns in order to manage safely the social distancing elements of the Covid-19 guidelines.

Please click on the headings below for links to further information:

[Guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[HSE Coronavirus information](#)

[HSE Social Distancing Guidelines](#)

[Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

[HSE Working safely during Coronavirus](#)

[Guidance on social distancing in public spaces](#)





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Reopening premises following temporary partial or full shutdown

On resuming occupation of a premises after temporary partial or full shutdown, performing inspections and reinstating the utilities and services may be the sole responsibility of the tenant or involve, to a lesser or greater degree, the landlord or managing agent. Either way, it should be carefully planned to ensure the building utilities and services are brought back into operation in a controlled and safe manner.

Reinstating power, gas supplies, HVAC, water supplies and other services should be performed by trained and competent personnel familiar with the facility, equipment and the relevant OEM guidelines.

The objective is to resume occupation and operations in a controlled and safe manner, whilst minimising the risk of further disruption at this sensitive time. To achieve this, initial and regular communication with all tenants is important to co-ordinate responsibilities – see *Consultation section below*. This is especially pertinent for multi-tenanted buildings and high-rise offices, to agree a strategy and maintain social distancing in communal areas.

Consultation

Property owners / managing agents should:

- Consult with tenants about the return to the premises.
- Keep up to date with the latest government guidance to help them plan.

When planning to return to the premises, tenants must:

- Consult with staff and employee representatives, including any trade union representatives and health and safety officials.
- Consider the risks of anyone being harmed in the workplace and carry out a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.
- Make the workplace as safe as possible for staff, customers and other visitors.

Some organisations may be anxious about their safety when returning to the premises, and all tenants/managing agents should talk about any concerns and try to resolve them together. It can also help to signpost staff to any health and wellbeing support that is available, for example occupational health or mental health services.





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Risk management

The items that need to be considered will vary depending on the site layout, specific equipment and processes involved, so should be assessed carefully in the planning stage. The following general considerations should be reviewed and considered as part of this process.

You must consider and manage the following:

- Update risk assessments and working procedures in respect of the Covid-19 amendment.
- For multi-tenanted buildings, develop and communicate a strategy to maintain social distancing in communal areas, especially where there is large footfall, including use of elevators, access and egress routes, plus surrounding open or enclosed spaces under your responsibility.
- Confirm that your employees have had training refreshed in respect of Covid-19 for risk assessments and method statements.
- Confirm that you have, and can supply & provide, the correct PPE where this is required for work-related activities.
- Ensure that all your employees and those of your managing agents are symptom-free and have not been in contact within the last 14 days with someone who has had, or is suspected to have had, Covid-19, or someone who has been required to self-isolate with suspected Covid-19.
- In addition, anyone who is classed as a vulnerable person, through age, ill health condition, pregnancy, or who is a carer for someone who is vulnerable, should remain away from work.
- Inform your insurer that you are operational, and following specific guidance issued by HM Government and the HSE in respect of Covid-19.
- Confirm that all relevant insurance policies areas still in force and the limits of indemnity remain as before the crisis.

Car parks

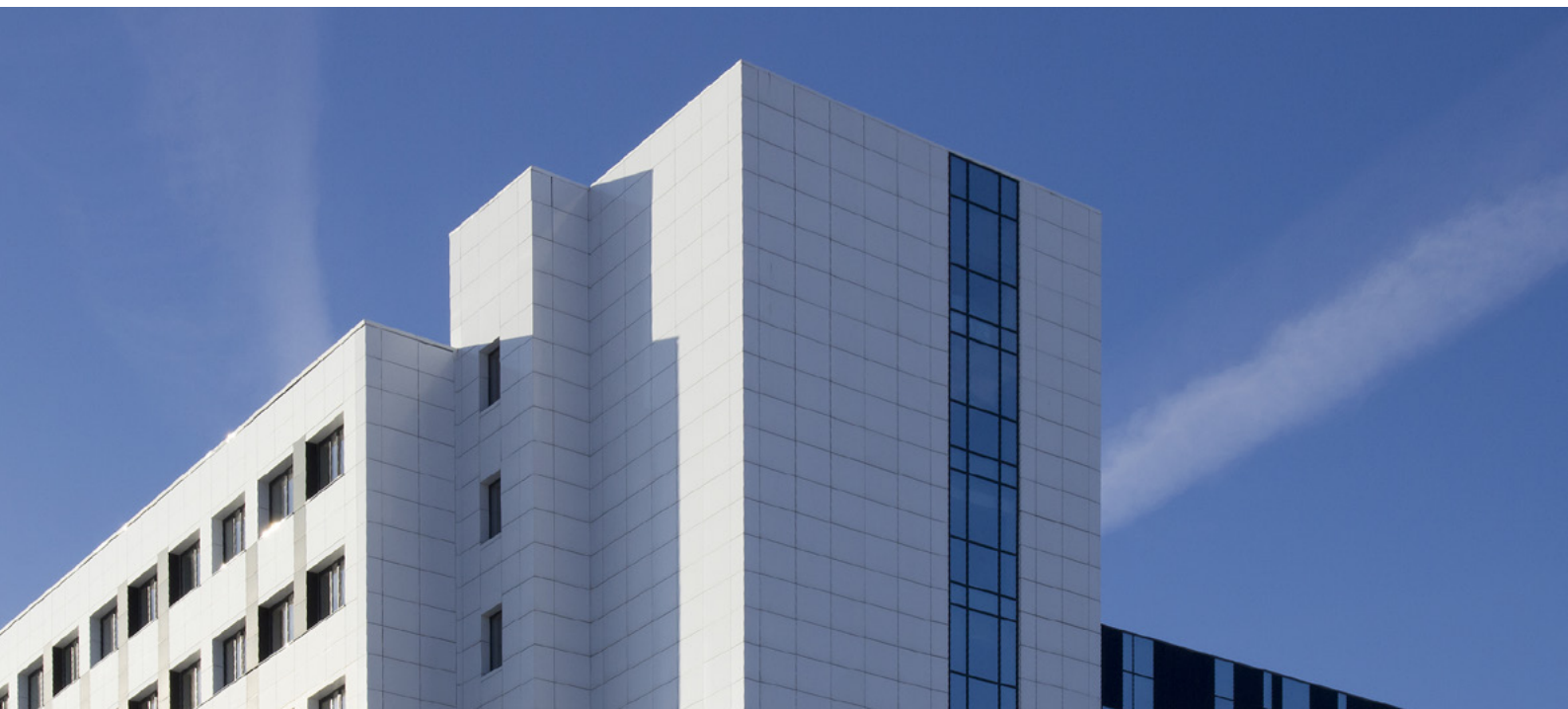
- Ensure that social distancing in car parks can be achieved by introducing a one-way traffic flow system, if not already in place.
- Ensure there are adequate directions and prominent signage.
- Use alternative parking bays to ensure social distancing.
- Reduce speed in car parks to 5 mph to protect pedestrians.
- Employees involved in directing car parking operations must wear high visibility clothing.
- Make sure that access and egress to car parks is managed in such a way as to maintain social distancing requirements.
- In line with the Government advice, be aware that increased cycle use is likely for both employees and members of the public. You must ensure that traffic management arrangements take account of this.
- You must train all your employees in the new procedures and share information with them regarding the risk assessment before the premises reopen.
- Make sure that they understand fully how to manage the social distancing guidelines.



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Document the following:

- **Assess:** review all areas of work activity, look for contact points between employees and others, possibly any members of the public or delivery drivers and consider / re-assess if these can be managed within the current social distancing guidelines. Update your risk assessments to reflect any changes.
- **Train and inform:** communicate with your employees and tenants about what the new changes may mean, ensuring that they fully understand and above all document and record all training and information going forward.
- **Clean:** review welfare arrangements and facilities provided - can social distancing be achieved in washrooms and canteen facilities? You may need to stagger the use of these facilities and supervise or control access and egress.
- If you have an external catering provider, they must be able to demonstrate that they can effectively maintain social distancing in kitchen preparation areas, servery and seating areas.
- The provider must also consult with you regarding cleaning and sanitisation of all areas under their control, as well as sharing their revised Covid-19 risk assessments with the managing agent/tenants.
- All actions, systems and procedures must be documented – you may be required to produce evidence of compliance to a regulator.





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Cleaning – general guidance applicable to all locations

- Think about the layout of your premises and areas you are responsible for, prior to opening for business. If your risk assessment identifies cleaning before opening, you should only consider cleaning surfaces yourself if you have the correct protective equipment and materials to hand, or these are readily available.
- We also understand that you may wish to use a service delivery option to do this work ahead of opening.

For areas you are responsible for, prepare a schedule of cleaning steps covering the following and liaise and communicate with tenants of the building:

- Ensure that cleaning and sanitisation is carried out a regularly throughout the day, frequency will be dictated by your Covid-19 risk assessment and obvious footfall patterns linked to the working day.
- Access and egress routes – what could anyone have touched?
- Always work from clean to dirty areas, to avoid spreading any contamination.
- Door handles, letterboxes, keys, vehicles, finger plates, keypads, glass surfaces and floors – these are just a few areas but may well differ from premises to premises, and internally across departments.
- Washrooms should be subjected to a deep clean, especially if they are available for public use.
- Phones, PC's, keyboards, desks, vending machines and PIN pads.
- Although the Covid-19 virus cannot survive long on hard surfaces it is advised that these should be cleaned/sanitised thoroughly.
- Flush toilets, run taps and showers which have been unused for some weeks multiple times to minimise the risk of legionella.

Common areas

For multi-tenanted buildings, as well as social distancing, this will include the “effective management” of welfare arrangements where you have responsibility for common areas – such as reception lobbies, plant rooms, elevators, changing areas, locker rooms, shower/washrooms and toilet facilities, welfare etc.

- Washroom facilities should not be under any circumstance be degraded, as hand washing remains a vital control measure in respect of Covid-19.
- Provide hand sanitiser throughout the common areas of the premises under your responsibility, particularly at entrances, exits and lift lobbies etc.
- Display notices and posters reminding staff, tenants and visitors to wash their hands regularly.

There are now additional rules, inductions and communication with respect to Covid-19 arrangements, and you must ensure that your staff, tenants and visitors co-operate fully regarding these.



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Ventilation extraction

Building ventilation systems may have been left running for essential humidity and temperature control within the structure. In this instance it is not necessary to do anything with these systems, as any microbes/contaminants will have been carried through the ventilation system and removed from circulation.

The Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Associations (REHVA) has carried out research and published a paper (17th March 2020) based on the current experience and knowledge of Covid-19. This can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.rehva.eu/activities/covid-19-guidance>

The overall management of Covid-19 risk should be achieved through good hygiene and cleaning procedures as defined with the current HM Government guidelines. Further advice can be found here <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Water systems checks

Legionella checks - this is important because standing water can generate Legionella bacteria growth.

Generally, the advice is that temperature control is the traditional strategy for reducing the risk of legionella in hot and cold-water systems:

- Cold water systems should be maintained, where possible, at a temperature below 20°C.
- Hot water should be stored at least at 60°C and distributed so that it reaches a temperature of 50°C (55°C in healthcare premises) within one minute at the outlets.

However, much will depend on the type of water systems, so please check using the below link to the HSE website or seek expert advice from water treatment companies specializing in this area.

- Check with your water treatment provider, if your systems are under contract or you have an FM management company in place.
- Run all water systems, hot and cold, for at least 15 minutes to clear any standing water in the systems.
- Include showers, if this is relevant to your premises.

More detailed advice is available from the HSE Website via the following link

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/hot-and-cold.htm>





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Building Inspection

The following general checks should be made of the general building condition and the fire & security protection:

- Undertake a thorough inspection of the perimeter security including fences, gates, doors, windows, shutters etc., to ensure they are undamaged and locking devices are serviceable.
- Inspect the building for any signs of damage or deterioration and arrange for remedial repairs as necessary.
- Fire alarm systems, access control, CCTV systems, intruder alarms, fire doors (including self-closers), fire extinguishers, fire dampers, emergency lighting/signage and emergency exits should be checked and/or tested to, ensure they are fully operational and, where required, arrange for a service or emergency visit to rectify faults.
- Review the alarm keyholders to ensure adequate coverage is provided and ensure the intruder and fire alarm system Alarm Receiving Centres are informed of any changes.
- Fixed automatic fire suppression systems should be checked to ensure they are serviceable, and when in doubt arrange a service visit by the installer. Examples of systems include, but are not limited to:
 - » Wet chemical systems to commercial cooking ranges.
 - » Gaseous fire suppression systems, protecting critical plant & equipment.
 - » Water mist systems.
- Where automatic fire sprinklers systems are installed, please refer to the separate detailed guidance note.
- Reinstating building services where they had been shut down (elevators, escalators, heating, air conditioning, power and gas supplies etc) should follow the OEM procedures, through suitably trained and competent staff, to ensure this is undertaken safely to minimise hazards and avoid damage or injury.
- Where the incoming water supplies have been isolated at the stopcock and systems drained, reinstating and refilling should be conducted in a slow controlled manner, checking for any leaks and to avoid water hammer which can cause damage to pipes, connections and fittings.
- Waste storage and removal should be carefully managed as part of general housekeeping on site. Frequency of waste collections may be less than necessary until normal services are fully resumed. Where additional arrangements are made to remove waste build-up, ensure you only use registered companies to avoid the potential risk of 'fly-tipping'.
- To check that a company is registered, go to the following website:
<https://environment.data.gov.uk/public-register/view/search-waste-carriers-brokers>
- Taking shortcuts when reinstating utility services or starting-up machinery that have been idle should be avoided, as this could lead to costly further disruption.