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Updated Site Operating Procedures (V3)

The Site Operating Procedures (SOP) V3 is new guidance outlining a series of measures which will allow those within the construction industry to work safely during the Covid-19 pandemic

SOCOTEC understands that government guidance surrounding Covid-19 is constantly changing to reflect the fast-moving nature of the situation. Below is some guidance on the most common points concerning the impact of Coronavirus on the construction industry.

On 14 April 2020, the Construction Leadership Council (CLC) updated a guidance document entitled [Site Operating Procedures – Protection for Your Workforce During Coronavirus](#). Written in accordance with guidelines from [Public Health England](#), the Site Operating Procedures (SOP) V3 is new guidance outlining a series of measures which will allow those within the construction industry to work safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

The SOP V3 document introduces consistent measures for construction sites of all sizes and types in line with the government's recommendations on social distancing, as well as clarifying some of the most common points concerning the impact of Coronavirus on the construction industry. Guidance on a range of topics is provided, including self-isolation, travelling to work, site access points, hand washing, avoiding close working and cleaning.

Can construction work continue to take place during the pandemic?

Consistent advice from the Chief Medical Officer, Secretary of State for Business and the HSE has instructed the vast majority of businesses – including those within the construction sector – to remain operational. While employers are recommended to take every possible step to facilitate employees working from home, this is clearly not possible in the case of construction workers. Nevertheless, provided that SOP guidelines are fully adhered to – both when travelling to and from work and within the workplace itself – construction work is permitted to continue and sites can remain open.

How can employers and employees within the construction sector safely comply with social distancing measures?

Construction sites continuing to operate during the Covid-19 pandemic must ensure that they are adhering to the social distancing measures outlined in the SOP V3 document in order to protect their workforce and minimise the risk of infection. However, despite the go-ahead from the government for construction sites to remain operational, many employees will find it is near impossible to maintain the required two metre distance to carry out their work to a safe and sufficient standard.

Where this is the case, employers should consider whether the activity needs to continue for the site to remain operational, and if this is the case, they must risk assess the situation accordingly by referring to the hierarchy of controls within the SOP V3 guidance note. A range of mitigating actions have been put in place to enable construction workers to comply with social distancing guidelines in situations where keeping a two metre distance is not possible. These include, but are not limited to:

- › Minimising the amount of time and frequency that workers are within two metres of one another
- › Instructing workers to work side by side or facing away from one another
- › Keeping groups of workers that have to work within two metres of one another together in as small a team as possible
- › Limiting the use of lifts and hoists or, when these are in use, lowering the capacity to reduce congestion and contact
- › Where face-to-face contact is essential, keeping timings to 15 minutes or less wherever possible.

It should be noted that this updated SOP document confirms the HSE as the enforcement body for breaches of social distancing guidelines. Construction sites which fail to consistently comply with the enforcement of social distancing measures could result in the HSE suspending some or all works and issuing fines in order to secure improvements.

How can SOCOTEC help your organisation to comply with the SOP V3 guidelines?

SOCOTEC understands that government guidance surrounding Covid-19 is constantly changing to reflect the fast-moving nature of the situation and can often prove confusing as a result. Our experienced Health & Safety consultants can provide tailored advice and carry out audits to ensure that you are complying fully with the updated Site Operating Procedures. This compliance audit can either be bolted on to a general site safety audit or be undertaken as a standalone visit, depending on your individual site requirements.

In addition, SOCOTEC continues to provide and supply services to clients that require them, ensuring that all of the work carried out fully complies with SOP V3 guidance to ensure the safety of our clients and employees at all times.

**Please note that as these guidelines have been issued by Public Health England, separate guidance for construction workers may apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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