

BACK TO WORK SERIES

BUILDING OPERATIONS

If you would like to speak to us about any of this guidance or have any questions about the workplace during the pandemic, one of our experts will be happy to help. Contact us at:

response@macegroup.com

Globally, social distancing measures are currently being applied across the workplace as businesses prepare to reopen their buildings and welcome back employees.

With measures implemented to create a safe place of work, daily building operations will soon resume, but what will they look like and how will processes and procedures need to change to keep employees, visitors and contractors safe?

In the fourth edition of our Back to Work series, Mace's workplace specialists outline their recommendations for how to safely conduct day-to-day operations in the building.

RESTAURANTS AND CANTEEN SPACES

As with desks and meeting rooms, canteens and restaurant facilities will need to be reviewed, with desk stickers and floor markings used to show employees where to sit, stand and queue safely at meal times.

Tables and chairs will need to be moved or removed to allow for social distancing when sitting to eat, and disposable table cloths should be used to reduce the need for tables to be disinfected after every use.

As social distancing measures will reduce the capacity of the restaurant, opening times may need to be extended. Customer access to serving points will need to be restricted, and a safe queuing system implemented.

Consider introducing staggered serving times to help reduce the number of people in the areas at any one time. It may be necessary to provide additional seating in other areas of the building, or to allow employees to eat at their desk during peak hours.

The canteen should be regularly cleaned, and surfaces disinfected throughout opening hours with daily deep cleans conducted in the evening. Additionally, hand sanitiser stations should be placed in prominent locations so employees can clean their hands before and after eating.

FOOD SERVICE

With catering services resumed, the impact of physical changes across the restaurant will need to be reflected in the service offered. The selection of food available may need to be reduced with some items removed completely and serving methods limited, to reduce the number of people required in the kitchen.

Self-serve options should be removed to reduce the likelihood of items being handled by multiple individuals before being purchased. Pre-made and pre-packed items should be considered to reduce the time employees spend within the servery.

Where possible, self-service utensils and condiments should be removed and instead served at the point of purchase by the food service team. If this is not possible, cutlery should be cleaned and sanitised regularly along with tills and servery points, including counter tops.

Customer facing team members should be provided with PPE and, if possible, screens installed at till and servery points. Payment for food should be by contactless card payments only.

A click and collect or delivery service should be considered to reduce the need for queuing within the restaurant, with an online payment option at the point of purchase.

ON SITE FACILITIES

On site facilities including toilets and shower rooms can see a high footfall throughout the day, with high risk areas for the transmission of viruses.

Toilets should remain open where possible, however some cubicles and urinals should be taken out of use where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Hand dryers should be switched off, with single-use paper towels provided for employee use. Signage should be installed to demonstrate new hygiene procedures for hand washing.

COFFEE POINTS

During the working day, tea and coffee points can become crowded, especially at the start of the day and at lunch times.

Desks in this area will need to be reduced or removed and the number of people at the coffee point will need to be limited, in some cases to one person at a time.

Employees should be encouraged to bring their own mugs, glass wear and water bottles, which should be washed and reused throughout the day.

Signage and floor markings should be used in this area to encourage social distancing and, if possible, contactless hand soap dispensers provided at sinks with single-use hand towels.

As with the canteen, coffee points should be cleaned following peak periods, and surfaces sanitised throughout the working day. The visibility of a cleaning team across food service areas and coffee points will provide reassurance to employees on the cleanliness of these areas and promote hygiene and employee welfare.

Where possible, contactless soap dispensers should be introduced. Where these are not installed, dispensers and taps should be frequently sanitised within washrooms.

As with other on-site facilities, shower rooms will need to be reviewed to ensure social distancing measures can be upheld. Where changing facilities cannot be adapted to allow individuals to keep two metres apart, it may be necessary to limit the use of shower and locker rooms, or to remove them from service entirely.

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CLEANING

Cleaning will play a vital part in the reopening of offices. Businesses will now be reviewing their cleaning specifications and implementing new stringent ways of working.

Implementing a visible cleaning team during the day will provide reassurance to individuals and enhance the employee experience. It may be necessary to assign different team members to set areas of the building to ensure the new cleaning schedules can be reinforced.

In addition to workstations, coffee points and canteen spaces, high-touch areas should be regularly sanitised throughout the day.

These touch points include:



Research published by The Journal of Hospital Infection shows that the coronavirus can be neutralised within a minute by disinfecting surfaces with 62-71% alcohol-based products.

Deep cleans should be carried out daily or, where possible, hourly across all areas within the building. Cleaning schedules should be revised to introduce deep cleans during evenings and weekends, or to follow shift changes for rotating departments and teams.

Meeting rooms should be cleaned after each use, or at regular intervals throughout the day. You may need to consider dedicating a team to oversee meeting room cleans and provide a schedule to ensure minimal disruption to employees. Room booking software should be updated to block out periods of time for cleaning after each meeting.

Sanitising wipes and hand-gel should be provided throughout the office area and employees should clean their workspace before and after use. Consider issuing personal hygiene packs to welcome people back to the office. These could include a mask, gloves, anti-bacterial gel, tissues and wipes.

Workplace ambassadors should undertake regular floor walks of the building to ensure the enhanced standards are being maintained, and to provide a point of contact for employees to give feedback.

In the event of a suspected Covid-19 case within the office, a thorough process for cleaning and sanitising contaminated surfaces will need to be established with the cleaning team.

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ENGINEERING AND HARD SERVICES

As with open office space, back of house areas will also need to be reviewed to establish a safe capacity with social distancing measures in place.

Plant and technical rooms may need to have a limit imposed on the number of engineers working in the area at one time. Shift patterns should be reviewed to incorporate reduced occupancy and social distancing measures, and plant rooms should be cleaned and sanitised after every shift. Ventilation may also need to be increased by keeping doors or windows open to reduce the recycling of air.

Where social distancing cannot be implemented, review the criticality of tasks and consider whether the activity needs to be carried out. If work must continue, all mitigating actions should be taken to reduce the risk of transmission between engineers.

SECURITY

Security teams will need to change their working patterns and processes to adhere to new workplace measures. Patrols should be reduced to single guards, with suitable lone working controls in place.

Patrol routes should be revised to take into account any new one-way systems that have been implemented to observe social distancing measures.

Time within control rooms should be limited and, where possible, reduced to one person at a time. Ventilation should ideally be increased within control rooms and breaks should not be taken elsewhere in the building.

Radios and mobile phones should be issued for individual use where possible. Where handheld devices need to be shared, ensure staff wipe them with sanitiser before and after handover. Any enquiries or comments to the security team should be conducted over the phone or by email, not in person.

WASTE

In addition to normal waste collection and disposal, new hygiene practices will see an increase in waste produced within the building.

The introduction of single-use hand towels, sanitising wipes and disposable table cloths will mean waste will need to be collected and handled safely.

Research from the US National Institute of Health has indicated that Covid-19 can survive on...

**cardboard
for up to...**



**and on metal and
plastic for up to...**



This suggests that waste materials of all types, if not handled and disposed of correctly, pose the risk of spreading the virus.

Central waste bins will need to be emptied regularly by the cleaning team to avoid the overflow of potentially contaminated waste. During this process, the cleaning team should wear the appropriate PPE, including mask and gloves, while handling any waste, and carry hand sanitiser.

All waste container surfaces should be sanitised throughout the day and after every waste collection.

Any waste suspected of posing a biohazard risk should be bagged separately, in more than one waste bag, and disposed of following local biohazard guidance.

MAIL ROOM

The mail room can see an influx of visitors throughout the day, from both employees and external mail carriers. Action will need to be taken to reduce the risk to operatives working in this area.

Where possible, mail room operatives should request set delivery slots from external mail carriers and agree a drop off point, so deliveries can be managed and mail is not physically handed to operatives. If possible, and where security will allow, deliveries should be left outside and only collected once the delivery driver has stepped away.

Gloves and hand sanitiser should be provided for all mail room operatives to use while handling mail, and during deliveries or collections within the building.

It may be necessary to establish a pick-up and drop-off point for employees to retrieve mail while maintaining social distancing. Depending on the size of the building this may need to be increased to points on each floor.

For employees dropping off or collecting mail, timeslots should be issued to manage queues and maintain social distancing. Any enquiries to the post room by employees should be conducted over the phone or by email.

You should also consider stopping personal deliveries to the office for employees if these are currently permitted. This will lower the risk to mail room operatives, who would otherwise be unnecessarily exposed by additional deliveries.