



ASTONLARK

Motor Trade COVID-19 Workplace Risk Assessment

With the Motor Trade sector starting to think about reoccupying their premises, it is essential that they now start planning for this.

Whilst the HSE has said they will take a 'flexible and proportionate account of the risks and challenges arising from the pandemic', there is always the possibility of prosecution for those businesses that fail to follow Government advice. Additionally, the HSE may choose to issue prohibition or improvement notices.

The potential for employee liability claims also exists if businesses failed in their duty of care to staff.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act etc 1974 (HSWA), employers have a legal duty to protect the health, safety and welfare of their employees and anybody else who might be affected by their activities.

For those organisations that have not been able to arrange for staff to work remotely from home, it is essential that measures are put in place to reduce the risk of Covid-19 spreading between employees, visitors, contractors and customers.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 additionally states that employers must conduct a risk assessment of their activities and premises to identify these potential causes of harm and take steps to reduce the likelihood of this harm occurring.

If you employ **five or more** members of staff, it is a legal requirement to keep a written record of the main findings of your risk assessment. Even if you have fewer than five members of staff, it's good practice to document your risk assessments, as this will help you to demonstrate the steps you have taken to create a safe and compliant working environment.

You are required to review and update your risk assessment as circumstances change and keeping abreast of Government guidance will therefore be essential.

For more information on the carrying out of risk assessments, you can visit the HSE website at <https://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm>

Three areas a business may want to consider in their plans to reoccupy a premises are:

- Business needs
- Employee issues
- Environmental issues

BUSINESS NEEDS

Firstly, review how the business has performed during the lockdown period. What activities or functions cannot work remotely or are not performing well, and therefore need to be brought back into the workplace? Are there functions that are performing well and do not need to be brought back into the workplace?

The more people you can keep working remotely, the better. With social distancing requirements, the more space you have available in the workplace, the easier it will be to comply with Government guidance.

EMPLOYEE ISSUES

Next, carry out a review of your employees. Questions to consider may include:

- Which employees are classified as vulnerable (due to age, illness, pregnancy etc)?
- Are there employees living with others who are being shielded?
- How do employees commute to the workplace? Will this increase their exposure?
- Which employees may have increased anxiety levels, where a return to the workplace may cause mental health issues?
- Are there employees who may be complacent and therefore increase risks in the workplace?

HAZARD

It is essential in the risk assessment to understand the virus and how it is spread. In this case, it is spread in minute water droplets that are expelled from the body through sneezing, coughing, talking and breathing.

It is transferable to the hands and from there to surfaces, on which it can survive for a period of time depending on factors such as the surface type, its moisture content and temperature.

Given there is a possibility of death following infection, the risk assessment should recognise it is regarded as a high hazard.

LIKELIHOOD

Your risk assessment needs to examine the likelihood of exposure given the activities that are undertaken by employees at work and on their way to and from work. You will need to consider who your employees come in contact with whilst at work, and how long for.

ENVIRONMENTAL & WORKPLACE CONTROLS

Once the above has been considered, the risk assessment can examine the methods for controlling the risk of the disease spreading in your premises. You should look at the following areas:

- Site control
- Cleaning
- Signage & education
- Employee behaviour
- Procedures

Site Control

- How can you control access to and from the building to reduce people coming into contact with each other? Can you introduce one-way systems in and out of the building?
- Can you prevent customers, visitors and contractors accessing the office or workshop? (MOT viewing areas can now be closed as per [Government guidance](#))
- If contractors (valeting, windscreen replacement etc) are still working on site, what measures have they put in place?
- How will you control deliveries to the premises? Will they need to be wiped down or cleaned before being unpacked and placed into storage?
- Can you arrange to collect and deliver vehicles so that customers do not need to visit the workshop?
- Where customers do need to come into the building, limit the numbers allowed in, and control their movement. Markers on the floor can help keep customers apart

- Take some communal seating out of use so customers do not sit close to each other
- Can you create additional 'space' between reception staff and customers? Alternatively, can screens be erected as seen in other retail environments?
- Provide hand sanitisation points at all entrance and exit points
- What measures can be taken to reduce the frequency of contact with door mechanisms? Can they be held open with acoustic or magnetic systems (e.g. DorGuard)?
- Can desks in the reception area or office be repositioned further apart? Can employees use other parts of the building to further increase segregation?
- Ventilation is a good control if it takes infected air away from people and transfers it to somewhere where the virus will not do harm
- Are there jobs that can be carried out outside rather than in a workshop?

Cleaning

- Are vehicles cleaned prior to being worked on and before being handed back to a customer?
- Are keys being cleaned or wiped before exchanging hands?
- Are credit card payment machines cleaned after use?
- Have you provided staff with sprays and wipes for the cleaning of shared work equipment? Are you ensuring staff are doing this regularly?
- Can the frequency of site cleaning be increased, especially in public areas?
- Have you ensured all hand contact points are cleaned throughout the day including door furniture, handrails, IT equipment, desks, phones, taps and dispensers etc?
- Are staff provided with hand sanitisers?
- Are suitable disposable bins available for tissues, hand wipes and cleaning wipes?
- Have you removed items from the premises which will make it more difficult to clean with ease (e.g. rugs, mats, curtains and blinds)?
- Are plates and cutlery etc cleaned immediately after use in staff break areas?

Signage & Education

- Display posters and instructions at all entry and exit points and ensure they are regularly refreshed
- Hold daily discussions with staff to remind them of the procedures to be followed

Employee Behaviour

- Avoid handling cash and use mobile or contactless card payments where possible
- Ensure staff are maintaining two metre distances from each other. Where this isn't possible, the task should be stopped, or an alternative method established
- Use alternative bays in workshops so that mechanics do not come into close proximity with each other
- Split teams to reduce the number of employees in possible contact with each other
- Stagger start times and break times and limit the number of employees in break areas
- Can the use of items of plant or machinery be limited to one individual per shift? At the end of the shift, ensure the equipment is thoroughly cleaned
- Have staff been provided with suitable Personal Protective Equipment? Are they aware of how it should be used and disposed of?
- Are employees using new seat covers and disposable gloves for every job?
- Where possible, do not print documentation (these could be emailed) or MOT certificates unless the customer requires it for a specific reason. Customers can access, download and print MOT certificates from:
<https://www.gov.uk/check-mot-history>

- Can internal meetings be held in an outdoor space?
- Ensure staff are not shaking hands or standing or sitting too close to each other when issuing personal greetings

Procedures & Training

- What information do employees need to know about the virus? How will you keep up to date with changing guidance and how will you communicate this to employees?
- What do managers need to know so that they can monitor and supervise effectively?
- Are emergency procedures in place in case an employee becomes ill or shows symptoms?
- Have staff been advised of self-isolation procedures?
- What procedures are in place following suspected contamination of the workplace?

