Middlemarch Environmental Ltd COVID-19 Workplace Risk Assessment

COVID 19 is a new respiratory virus that can affect your lungs and airways. It is mainly transmitted between people through "respiratory droplets" in two ways; directly through breathing in droplets emitted by an infected persons coughing, sneezing, talking and heavy breath or, through surfaces infected with the droplets such as keyboards, handles, work equipment which are touched then that person touches their nose, eyes or mouth. It can be fatal and poses different levels of threat to different people. Those over 70 or with certain underlying existing health conditions are particularly at risk. With a national vaccination program now underway, there is a reduced risk of serious illness for those vaccinated, however, vaccinated people can still catch and transmit the disease to others. More information is available on those at risk here -https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/

We are a national business with several offices and a varied workforce of office, field and remote working staff, and it is important we adopt a companywide policy and safe system of work to manage the risks posed by COVID 19. Our response and organisational risk assessment is based on Government guidance and information, guidance from our governing body CIEEM and our internal company policies, to ensure we are acting responsibly both towards our staff and in the wider working environment. Current Government guidelines, rules and requirements, can be found here-https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus. While the government removed most legal requirements on the 19th July 2021, infection still poses a significant risk to our employees. As such, COVID 19 presents as a hazard to be risk assessed and managed within the workplace.

On 20th October 2020 Defra and Natural England published guidance for ecologists or environmental professionals carrying out field survey or mitigation works in England during the coronavirus pandemic. The guidance refers to interactions with mammal species as they are potentially susceptible to coronaviruses, and what to do if your work does not allow you to follow these guidelines.
The guidance states that to avoid transmitting COVID-19 from people to wild mammals you should:
- stay at least 2 metres from live wild mammals at all times
- only capture or handle live wild mammals if necessary
- avoid going within 2 metres of known burrows, dens, roosts or other breeding or regularly used resting sites of mammals, where possible.

Risk assessment approach and safe system of work

We have taken the approach of using the IOSH risk control hierarchy as set out below.

Covid-19 hierarchy of control
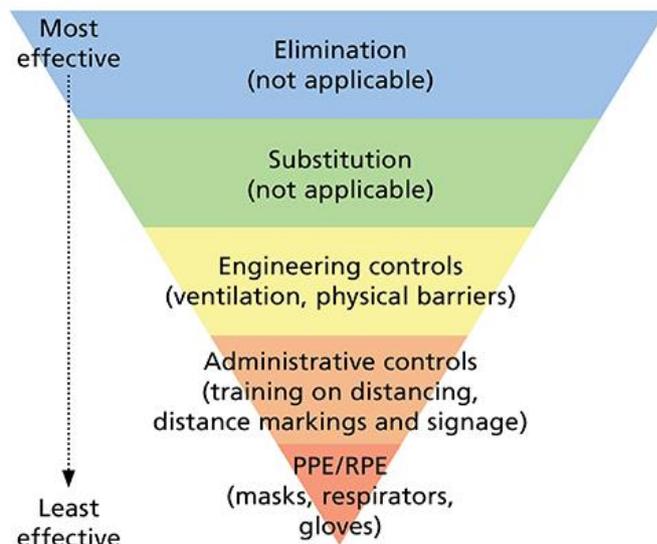
Engineering Controls
- Anyone experiencing symptoms should stay home, take a PCR test and await results before attending any workplaces.
- Those that can work from home are being encouraged to do so.
- General return to work within the office will be phased as the rate of new cases drops and it becomes safe to do so, based on a review of business needs.
- Anyone who self-isolates due to close contact with an infected person, will need a negative CV 19 test before returning to any office-based work to avoid asymptomatic transmission.
- Workstation seating is to be spaced at two metres and where possible single occupancy office rooms are to be used.
- Cough screens have been installed at desks where required throughout the head office.
- Office bathrooms and kitchens are restricted to single person use at any time.
- Workstations to be sanitised before and after each shift by the person using it.
- All staff with permanent desks are to sit at their own desks.
- Hot desks will be identified and numbered in a plan notified to all staff without permanent stations and booked prior to attending the office.
- No shared equipment where practicable, all equipment to be sanitised before and after use by the user before returning.
- Shared areas such as bathrooms, kitchens, stair wells, walkways are to be professionally cleaned every other working day and a record kept. Staff are also asked to clean kitchen areas after use and keep a record.
- Sanitiser to be made available for all tasks requiring it and to all staff. It should be applied when entering and leaving, buildings or vehicles and when using shared equipment. Hand washing should be done at regular intervals throughout the day.
- Briefings in buildings should be avoided where practicable, with meetings undertaken remotely via the internet.

- Internal surveys should be avoided where practicable and a risk assessment of the space must be undertaken by the surveyor, to ensure the space is being used in accordance with current government guidelines.
- Surveyors to maintain social distancing of 2m on site where practicable. Where closer working is required, it should be for short periods of time, face to face working is to be avoided, masks and eye protection are to be worn.

- **<u>Vehicle sharing</u>**
    - Where possible one work vehicle is assigned to a person for project durations to minimise the sharing of pool vehicles.
    - Vehicle sharing is to be avoided where practicable and only undertaken with prior senior management permission.
    - No more than two people may share a works or, private vehicle being used for work purposes, including travel to and from work sites.
    - A minimum two windows must be open during journeys to provide through ventilation.
    - Pool vehicles to be sanitised before after use by the user.
    - A face mask providing a minimum FFP2 protection level must be worn when sharing vehicles.

Administrative Controls
- Office based staff are required to take two lateral flow tests per week and only attend if the test results are clear.
- All field staff are encouraged to take regular, weekly lateral flow tests.
- A COVID 19 Risk Manager has been appointed to oversee the safe system of work and ensure adherence and monitoring.
- A dynamic risk assessment has been briefed and issued to all site staff for use on site to asses the safety of their work environment.
- Staff have been briefed on the risks and mitigation measures and on their responsibilities in managing the collective risk.
- Signage is placed around the offices informing staff of distancing and hygiene measures.
- Cleaning records are to be kept for equipment and workstations.
- Any staff member developing symptoms will report directly to the Operations Manager who will notify anyone that has worked closely with that person who can then isolate in line with government guidelines.

P.P.E
As the last line of resort, we have considered the use of PPE in mitigating the risks against the current available information. While we are focusing our mitigation on the higher levels of control, we have implemented the mandatory wearing of masks and gloves when undertaking internal surveys, when sharing vehicles and entering any client buildings, cabins, offices, or any other internal spaces.

Change
All available information will be monitored and used as it becomes available to inform this living document, which shall be reviewed and updated as required by the COVID 19 Risk Manager.

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