

COVID-19: RE-STARTING YOUR BUSINESS

guidance for businesses

Many businesses are looking to re-open after temporarily shutting down or reducing their operations due to Covid 19. However, re-opening can present specific hazards, which if not planned or managed properly, can result in damage, injury, legal action and further disruption to your business.

HERE'S WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Where production is either scaled up or scaled down (compared to the pre-shutdown period), there can be increased risk of fire, explosion, injury, machinery and plant damage or breakdown. This might be caused by a number of reasons like production overload, delayed maintenance cycles or frequent start up / shut down periods.

Also your business operations and activities may have changed over the last few months, for example, you might be using different raw materials due to supply chain challenges or perhaps you are producing different products, keeping an increased level of stock, introducing different processes or procedures or changing shift patterns and staffing. These changes might introduce new hazards or exposures into your workplace. So you should look at reassessing and

adapting your safe systems of work and working procedures, training, fire and security protection systems.

The planning and initial actions you take in getting your business back to 'fit for purpose' are often critical and provide a safe working structure within which you can successfully recommence operations.

Remember if you have furloughed staff, you will need to consider the timeframe agreed for bringing them back into the workplace, so allow for this in your planning arrangements.

If you can't create a safe working environment, whether that's because of inadequate fire protection, security, unsafe machinery / plant, employee competency or implementing COVID 19 precautions, then those operations should be postponed until corrective measures can be put in place.

HERE ARE OUR TOP 10 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Review existing risk assessments and actions** to ensure these are still relevant to the operation of your business. Make sure you're doing everything you can to ensure a safe working environment for your employees onsite, offsite and working at third party premises. This includes safe systems of work / working procedures.

Where your business operations and activities have changed, then new risk assessments should be completed and the results and actions shared with your employees and any visitors or contractors. Remember to include fire and security precautions in your review, implementing changes and enhancements where necessary to maintain an appropriate level of protection. For example, you may need to increase the scope of fire or intruder alarm detection, change opening or closing procedures or revisit sprinkler protection to ensure this remains adequate with changes in storage, layout, processes, stock materials. Further support can be found on our [health & safety risk assessment](#), [safe systems of work](#), and [fire risk assessment](#) pages of the risk management section of our website.



- **Undertake a thorough inspection of your site.** This includes all buildings (interior and exterior), utility services, machinery / plant, stock, any hazardous operations, emergency back-up systems and safety equipment. It's important to find and fix any unsafe or abnormal conditions such as damage, maintenance issues, leaks, faulty safety and emergency systems, improper housekeeping or storage, signs of vandalism or theft. Our [equipment checklist](#) may help you.
- **Review emergency response procedures** to make sure they are up-to-date and there is adequate coverage for assigned positions on all shifts, such as fire wardens, first aiders. Further support can be found on our [emergency procedures](#) page.
- **Allow enough time in your planning to recommission previously shut down machinery** or plant and processes in line with all standard operating procedures (SOPs) and manufacturers' guidelines.
- **Complete and reinstate any inspection, testing and maintenance procedures** (including those of a statutory nature) that may have lapsed since the shutdown. This might include utility services, machinery / plant, emergency systems, vehicles, fire and security protection / detection systems etc. Our [equipment checklist](#) may help you.
- **Ensure your employees have the competence and capability for the work activities to be carried out**, through the necessary skills, training and licensing requirements. Additional employee training programmes or certification and supervision may be required. Remember, where there is an insufficient number of competent employees, or new processes, machinery and plant require new skill sets they may need more instruction and information. Refer to your Return to Work policy (where you have one) as this will provide structure to make sure your employees are 'fit for work'. Mental health and wellbeing should be considered as well as physical fitness. Further support can be found on our [training](#) page.



- **Make sure you have competent persons to verify all protection / detection systems are in service and functioning correctly.** This will include fire sprinkler / suppression systems, fire pumps, water supplies, fire alarm systems, intruder alarm systems, CCTV and access control.
- **Carry out enhanced cleaning** of the workplace, pre and post re-opening. It's important to pay particular attention to communal areas and touchpoints, such as washing facilities, toilet flush and seats, door handles and push plates, hand rails, office equipment, machinery controls, food preparation areas. Don't forget to include company vehicles in your cleaning regime.

If you're introducing alcohol-based hand sanitizers into your workplace, it's important to remember these are flammable. As well as updating your fire risk assessments, make sure there are no ignition sources near where you are storing them. This includes electrical equipment, hot surfaces, smoking areas. You should ideally store them within purpose designed flammable liquid cabinets or steel cabinets. Further support can be found on our [storage and use of flammable / explosive materials](#) page.
- **Observe and enforce Covid 19 workplace restrictions in line with government regulations and guidance** for example social distancing, floor markings, protective equipment, staggered working hours and breaks and digital rather than paper use. Where these restrictions cannot be met, then work activities should either be revised to achieve them or stopped altogether. Guidance is available from [UK Government](#), [Public Health England](#), [Health Protection Scotland](#), [Public Health Wales](#) and the [HSE](#), or may also be available from trade / industry associations. Remember to include those employees working offsite and at 3rd party premises.
- **Review your business continuity plan** including supply chain resilience and implement mitigation measures as appropriate, to reflect any changes to your business operation and lessons learned from the temporary shutdown. Visit our [business continuity](#) page for further support.

Further information and support is available on our [risk management portal](#) and [Coronavirus resource hub](#)

Remember to check with your broker to make sure you still have the right insurance cover in place.