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To support members of the profession in achieving excellence in their practice of architecture and engineering in the interest of the community

SITE OPERATING PROCEDURES

Guidelines for construction sites during the COVID-19 pandemic

1.0 Introduction

Construction sites are not immune to the *coronavirus* pandemic. It is important to ensure that all workers, professionals and visitors on construction sites are protected to minimise the risk of infection, and to minimise the risk of spread of infection. This Guidance Note is intended to introduce consistent measures on sites of all sizes in line with the recommendations of the Health Authorities, particularly regarding social distancing.

These are exceptional circumstances, and the industry must endeavour to comply with the latest advice by the relevant authorities on *coronavirus* at all times. Government's Guidance is regularly updated [here](#), including the publication of general information in various languages commonly spoken in Malta.

The health and safety requirements of any construction activity must also not be compromised at this time. If an activity cannot be undertaken safely due to a lack of suitably qualified personnel being available or social distancing being implemented, it should not take place.

It is important to remain aware that emergency services, including our hospitals, fire department, police, civil protection, and other are also under great pressure at this time, and may not be in a position to respond as quickly as usual.

It is to be noted that the measures outlined below are to be implemented by the contractor, and the *perit* in charge is to assume no responsibility for their implementation or otherwise. Nevertheless, if a site is not consistently implementing the measures set out below, the *perit* in charge should contact the Health Authorities for further guidance. It may be required to shut the site down until the appropriate measures are adequately complied with depending on the specific circumstances, and in liaison with the Health Authorities.

While acknowledging that it may be easier to achieve the measures below on larger sites, where contractors may be better equipped to provide certain facilities, it is nevertheless recommended that all contractors are encouraged to implement as many measures as possible on their sites in order to minimise as much as possible the risks of exposure.

2.0 Persons prohibited to access construction sites

Any of the following persons should not be allowed onto a construction site:



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- Persons who have a high temperature or a new persistent cough – persons presenting such symptoms should be sent home and advised to contact the Public Health Helpline on 111 or +356 21324086 if they have a foreign number, to be given an appointment for a swab test;
- Vulnerable persons as defined by [Legal Notice 111 of 2020](#) or its subsequent amendments; and
- Persons who are in quarantine, or who live with persons who are in quarantine.

3.0 Procedure if someone presents symptoms while on a construction site

If a person develops a high temperature or a persistent cough while on a construction site, they should:

- Return home immediately;
- Avoid touching anything;
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.

They should then follow the guidance in Section 2.0, and not return to work until they have been declared as safe to return to the site by the Health Authorities.

4.0 Travel to site

Wherever possible workers should travel directly to the site alone, using their own transport. The following measures may be provided, if possible:

- Parking arrangements for additional cars and bicycles
- Other means of transport to avoid public transport (organised transport ensuring social distance)
- Providing hand cleaning facilities at entrances and exits, consisting of soap and water wherever possible, or hand sanitiser if water is not available
- Provisions for how a person would get home if taken ill while on site

5.0 Site access points

The following recommendations should be implemented without delay, and as applicable to the situation:

- Stop all non-essential visitors
- For large sites, introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Monitor site access points to enable social distancing



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- Remove or disable entry systems that require skin contact e.g. fingerprint scanners
- Require all workers and any other person accessing the site to wash or clean their hands before entering or leaving the site
- Allow plenty of space (at least 2m) between people waiting to enter site, and while on the site
- Regularly clean common contact surfaces in reception, office, access control and delivery areas e.g. scanners, turnstiles, screens, telephone handsets, desks, particularly during peak flow times
- Reduce the number of people in attendance at site inductions and consider holding them outdoors wherever possible
- Drivers should remain in their vehicles if the load will allow it and must wash or clean their hands before unloading goods and materials.

6.0 Avoiding Close Working

There will be situations where it is not possible or safe for workers to distance themselves from each other by 2m.

General Principles

- Non-essential physical work that requires close contact between workers should not be carried out
- Work requiring skin to skin contact should not be carried out
- Plan all other work to minimise contact between workers
- Re-usable PPE should be thoroughly cleaned after use and not shared between workers
- Single use PPE should be disposed of so that it cannot be reused
- Stairs should be used in preference to lifts or hoists
- Where lifts or hoists must be used:
 - Lower their capacity to reduce congestion and contact at all times
 - Regularly clean touchpoints, doors, buttons etc
- Increase ventilation in enclosed spaces
- Regularly clean the inside of vehicle cabs and between use by different operators

Site Meetings

- Only absolutely necessary meeting participants should attend
- Attendees should be 2m apart from each other
- Rooms should be well ventilated / windows opened to allow fresh air circulation
- Consider holding meetings in open areas where possible

Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning procedures should be in place across the site, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- Taps and washing facilities



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- Toilet flush and seats
- Door handles and push plates
- Hand rails on staircases and corridors
- Lift and hoist controls
- Machinery and equipment controls
- Food preparation and eating surfaces
- Telephone equipment
- Key boards, photocopiers and other office equipment
- Rubbish collection and storage points should be increased and emptied regularly throughout and at the end of each day.

7.0 Hand Washing

The importance of hand washing cannot be stressed enough. It is recommended that:

- For large sites, where there are more than 20 people present at any one time, additional hand washing facilities are provided over and above the usual welfare facilities
- Soap and fresh water are readily available and kept topped up at all times
- Hand sanitiser is provided where hand washing facilities are unavailable
- Hand washing facilities are regularly cleaned, and soap and sanitiser levels regularly checked
- Suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels are provided, with regular removal and disposal

8.0 Toilet Facilities

It the case where toilet facilities are provided on site:

- Restrict the number of people using toilet facilities at any one time e.g. use a welfare attendant
- Wash hands before and after using the facilities
- Enhance the cleaning regimes for toilet facilities particularly door handles, locks and the toilet flush
- Portable toilets should be avoided wherever possible, but where in use these should be cleaned and emptied more frequently
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins for hand towels with regular removal and disposal. Page

9.0 Break and Eating arrangements

With cafés and restaurants having been closed, 'canteens' cannot operate as normal. A number of large construction sites provide kitchen facilities where workers can heat food and make hot



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drinks. It is recommended that kitchen equipment and utensils are regularly cleaned between use.

The workforce should also be required to stay on site once they have entered it, rather than leaving the site for their breaks. In addition:

- Dedicated eating areas should be identified on site to reduce food waste and contamination
- Break times should be staggered to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Hand cleaning facilities or hand sanitiser should be available at the entrance of any room where people eat and should be used by workers when entering and leaving the area
- The workforce should be asked to bring pre-prepared meals and refillable drinking bottles from home
- Workers should sit 2m apart whilst eating
- Drinking water should be provided with enhanced cleaning measures of the tap mechanism introduced
- Tables should be cleaned between each use
- All rubbish should be put straight in the bin and not left for someone else to clear up
- All areas used for eating must be thoroughly cleaned at the end of each break and shift, including chairs, door handles, vending machines and payment devices.

10.0 Changing Facilities

With regard to changing facilities the following measures should be introduced:

- Introduce staggered start and finish times to reduce congestion and contact at all times
- Introduce enhanced cleaning of all facilities throughout the day and at the end of each day
- Consider increasing the number or size of facilities available on site if possible
- Based on the size of each facility, determine how many people can use it at any one time to maintain a distance of 2m
- Provide suitable and sufficient rubbish bins in these areas with regular removal and disposal.

References:

- [Construction Sector - Site Operating Procedures, Construction Leadership Council, UK](#)
- [Prevent the infection of coronavirus during building and construction work, Workplace Denmark](#)