



Fleet Safety

COVID19 – Protecting your business

The ‘luxury’ of working from home does not apply to everyone and is not practical for every business. The service sector and haulage industries need to take extra precautions to ensure their drivers are protected as they continue to serve customers and provide (often essential) services during the pandemic. Indeed there is extra demand for new drivers and indications of employees being temporarily seconded into such roles.

A consequence of the pandemic is the increased demand for home deliveries of essential items. Home delivery operators are expected to provide an essential role over the next few months by ensuring that people who are self-isolating can easily access food and other essentials. However, there is a possibility that drivers could be exposing themselves to risk as well as personally spreading the virus themselves – or via the goods they are delivering.

This document covers some basic principles and guidance for additional consideration during the pandemic.



USEFUL WEBSITES

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/drivers-transport-delivery-coronavirus.htm>



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DRIVER HOURS RULES

The Department for Transport (DfT) have announced that there will be a temporary and limited relaxation of the enforcement of drivers' hours rules in England, Scotland, and Wales for the drivers of vehicles involved in the delivery of food, personal care and household paper and cleaning materials, and over the counter pharmaceuticals.

The HSE have commented in relation to this relaxation: 'we are clear that driver safety must not be compromised, and drivers should not be expected to drive whilst tired. Employers remain responsible for the health and safety of their employees, other road users, and anyone involved in loading and unloading vehicles. These arrangements may change during this time'.

PERSONAL VEHICLE USE

If circumstances dictate that you allow employees to use their own vehicle for work, ensure employees know they should have the necessary insurance in place that permits business use.

Remind employees that company policies and safety guidance, including regular vehicle checks, still apply when driving your own vehicle.

NEW DRIVERS

There may be increased demand for new drivers. Ensure that these are notified to your insurer and under your motor fleet coverage where relevant and that the usual policies, procedures and training are communicated. A pragmatic approach may require to be taken to communicate 'fundamentals' in an abbreviated fashion.

Basic checks, at the very least licence checks, should be carried out as normal to validate the individual's driving capability and competence. It is acknowledged that the usual driver assessment checks and the full extent of usual training may need to be curtailed/postponed during the current crisis.

HYGIENE AND DISINFECTION

Instruct employees/drivers to:

- Sanitise frequently touched vehicle surfaces on a regular basis to avoid potential contamination, especially if the vehicle is shared/used by others.
- Wear gloves outside of the vehicle to avoid contact with surfaces and objects.
- Wash hands frequently (i.e. between deliveries/jobs) using liquid soap and water (hot or cold is just as effective) for at least 20 seconds and avoid touching surfaces while drying hands; use hand sanitiser (comprised of at least 60% alcohol) if no access to washing facilities.

- Avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, throw the tissue in the bin when safely stopped, and wash hands.
- Sanitise phones and devices regularly and avoid putting near the face (use speaker function).
- Wear gloves when fuelling as fuel pumps and associated handles/keypads are frequently touched surfaces that are not sanitised.
- Try to use a contactless method of payment for fuel/snacks/drinks if possible. Regardless of payment method wash your hands/sanitise after making purchases.

CUSTOMER CONTACT

- Currently, best practice advice is to avoid shaking hands or making physical contact with customers upon arrival/departure at the job.
- Limit touching any shared surfaces such as counters, stair railings, lift keypads, door handles. If necessary, use gloves or a tissue to prevent direct contact.
- Avoid working in busy/confined areas. Speak to your manager immediately if you have any concerns that could affect your ability to safely do your job.

REST BREAKS

All drivers must have access to welfare facilities in the premises they visit as part of their work. The HSE have noted that some drivers are not being allowed to use welfare facilities when they deliver commenting that:

'Preventing access is against the law, equally it's not the sensible thing to do. Drivers must have access to welfare facilities in the premises they visit as part of their work. Those who already provide reasonable access to toilets and handwashing facilities should continue to do so. With the latest advice for hands to be washed regularly, failure to allow access to welfare facilities may increase the risk of the COVID-19 infection spreading'.

In addition consider:

- To avoid fatigue ensure drivers continue to adhere to required rest breaks while driving. However, be mindful that some locations may be in lockdown and usual rest locations may be closed.
- Plan safe routes in advance (suitable for your vehicle size and type), remembering that diversions could be in place due to lockdowns or closures.
- Avoid visiting busy locations, such as cafés and restaurants. Wash hands/sanitise before eating and before returning vehicle.

DELIVERIES

For delivery drivers organisations should be taking measures to change their usual processes to deliver goods with the minimum of human contact. For example:

- The act of signing for delivery with your fingertip on a screen should stop. It makes sense not to place fingers on widely shared surfaces, however often it is cleaned.
- If we know that the recipient of goods is at home/work the simplest process may be to leave the delivery outside the door and then call them to let them know it is there, with the driver waiting an effective distance away from the door to make a visual check that the parcel has been received. They could even take an image of the customer collecting it to confirm receipt.
- Whilst (currently) there is limited evidence that there is a high risk of spread of Covid19 from food or packaging, a cautious approach, where practical, may be sensible via the use of gloves, wiping down surfaces and hygiene both from the perspective of the driver and customer.

DISTRACTIONS

With local and global situations changing by the hour, it's understandable for employees to want to stay up to date with the latest news and advice and remain in regular contact with friends and loved ones. However, it's important to refrain from making calls, sending texts, or checking for updates when behind the wheel, as distracted driving significantly increases the chance of being involved in a crash – this includes hands-free use.

WELLBEING AND IMPAIRMENT

The outbreak might affect employees in other areas of their life, including sleeping, eating, worsening of existing health problems, mental wellbeing and increased use of alcohol and drugs; all of which have the potential to significantly impair driving ability.

- Encourage employees to support themselves by eating healthy, exercising, getting plenty of sleep and avoiding alcohol and drugs.
- Ensure managers are available to talk to if employees feel any area of their life is affecting their safety while driving for work.
- Be aware that over-the-counter medicines can have side-effects including dizziness, fatigue, nausea and so on. Check the label of any medication you are taking to make sure you are safe to drive.

OFF LIMIT LOCATIONS

Follow local, national and employer advice on locations that are off-limits, social distancing, crowd size etc.

CARRYING COLLEAGUES / PASSENGERS

If you are required to travel with colleagues and feel uncomfortable doing so during this time, speak to your manager immediately.

STAYING CALM

- Stress and worry can significantly affect driving. It's important to re-iterate to drivers at this challenging time not to let external factors negatively influence their attitude and behaviour behind the wheel i.e. getting home safely to loved ones must remain the priority. Once home safely, remember to thoroughly wash your hands again!
- Be mindful that others on the road may be more distracted than usual at this time.
- Remember that defensive driving is the best protection! Patience and forgiveness of others are good practices and will assist in keeping employees safe.
- Continue to use good lifting practices to avoid injury during material handling activities and remember to wash/sanitise your hands after handling items.

