



# Construction Sector - Site Operating Procedures

## Protecting Your Workforce (COVID 19) - Supplementary Requirements for Plant Occupations

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### 1. Introduction

The Construction Leadership Council (CLC) and the Scottish Construction Industry Coronavirus (CICV) Forum have produced guidance through Site Operating Procedures (SOP) and Site Operating Guidance (SOG) publications respectively on protecting the workforce during the coronavirus-COVID 19 pandemic to minimise the risk of spreading the infection, based on respective Government's latest recommendations on social distancing and workplace organisation.

This joint CPA and SPOA publication for plant occupations should be read in conjunction with the CLC SOP and CICV SOG publications and focusses on plant and equipment-based occupations and provides tailored guidance on how to comply with the required social distancing outlined in the generic publications.

The latest CLC SOP document can be downloaded from the following links:

<https://www.constructionleadershipcouncil.co.uk/news/clc-site-operating-procedures-guidance-v5/>

<https://builduk.org/coronavirus/>

<https://www.cpa.uk.net/cpalinksgovernmentindustryguidance/>

The latest CICV Forum Safe Operating Guidance can be downloaded at:

<http://cicvforum.co.uk/downloads/>

<https://www.spoa.org.uk/spoa-news/spoa-news>

Other UK Government-issued sector-specific guidance on working safely during coronavirus including construction, factories/warehouses, offices and vehicles:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>



## 2. Scope of Occupations

For the purposes of this document, the following listed plant occupations are covered:

- Plant operator/operative;
- Supporting workers e.g. slinger/signaller, 'banksman', traffic marshal; rescue personnel;
- Maintenance personnel e.g. mechanic, fitter, inspectors/examiner, installer;
- Plant delivery/collection personnel e.g. 'low-loader' driver.

## 3. Preparing the Machine for Work

For all plant operations, there should be where possible a policy of a dedicated operator for each machine, minimising potential contamination within the cab/platform area.

Where a change of operators needs to take place, then a thorough cleaning/sanitising procedure described within the hand washing and cleaning sections of the SOP/SOG needs to be carried out each time. Normal handwashing (20 seconds minimum) or hand sanitisation (minimum 60% alcohol-based) procedures should be undertaken before approaching the machine.

Where a machine is used by more than one operator during the working day, a daily briefing should be undertaken to remind each user of the need to clean between operator exchanges and/or the responsibility for regular/ongoing cleaning passed to a designated person.

Touch point components for accessing the cab/platform such as steps, handrails, handles, latches etc. should be treated as potentially contaminated and cleaned/sanitised using appropriate products e.g. sanitisers/wipes/detergents etc. before entering both the cab/platform and areas required to conduct pre-start checks. This is particularly important where others have accessed the machine.

Handles, levers, controls, steering wheels, switches, data screens, seat adjusting mechanisms, arm rests etc. within the cab/platform should further be cleaned/sanitised before starting and operating the machine. If gloves have been worn outside of the machine, they should be removed first before cleaning/sanitising takes place and only re-worn after the operator has left the machine.

## 4. Operating the Machine

Normal exclusion zone requirements apply meaning that direct supporting workers e.g. 'banksman' are clear of all moving parts of an operational machine, with non-supporting outside of the designated exclusion zone.

Where workers need to approach the cab/platform, once permitted to enter the exclusion zone by the operator, they should maintain the required distance (2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation) and not touch, lean or stand on any part of the machine during the conversation. Hand signals or radio communication should be the main communication method in maintaining segregation and distancing. See section 6 – Communications.

Passengers should not be carried in or on the cab/platform unless an integral part of the operation e.g. direct support operative or hoist/MEWP activities. If this is the case, then mitigations such outlined in the SOP/SOG hierarchy of controls/key control measures such as the minimum distance being maintained between any seating or standing position, minimising time spent within the same area, screening or the wearing of face coverings and the cleansing/sanitising of touch points etc. carried out on a regular basis should be considered.

During break periods, if the operator leaves the cab, hand washing procedures should be carried out before going back to their machine.



If gloves are or need to be worn when leaving the machine, they should not touch controls, handrails etc. and removed when approaching the machine. If other workers entered the cab/platform, cleaning/sanitising procedures as outlined in section 3 should be carried out.

## **5. Direct Support Activities**

Gloves will routinely be used to handle equipment such as lifting chains, loads, machine components etc. during work and this should be maintained. The condition of gloves should be regularly checked and where skin is exposed, the gloves should be changed with cleaning/sanitising procedures undertaken before wearing the new gloves.

Communication with an operator or driver by marshals, signallers, support staff etc. should be in accordance with the advice on section 6: communication.

If an operation requires the use of a second-person and is being supplied by the plant owner/supplier, they should avoid where possible travelling in the same vehicle to and from the site. If they need to, then the guidance in the SOP/SOG needs to be followed.

## **6. Communications**

To maintain an effective exclusion zone and personal distancing, hand signals or two-way radio communication should be employed at all times.

If radios are to be used, each radio needs to be thoroughly cleaned using sanitising products, particularly around the microphone area, by the user both before and after use as the operation of a radio requires it to be close to the users' face. For this reason, radios should not be shared during the working day and ideally, a radio should be assigned to one person only for the project.

Support workers working directly with the machine e.g. slinger working with an excavator undertaking lifting operations should use hand signals instead. During briefings e.g. for lifting operations, minimum social distancing (2 metres or 1 metre with risk mitigation procedures) should be maintained.

## **7. Ceasing of Operations and Shut Down**

More than ever, cab/platforms should be isolated and secured, preventing unauthorised access to the operating station during out-of-service periods or at sites where they could be subject to intruder break ins.

## **8. Maintenance, Installation and Inspection Activities**

Visiting maintenance, installation and inspection workers should ensure that their vehicle, tools and equipment are cleaned/sanitised prior to leaving the depot or travel start point. If several maintenance workers are required for a particular activity, they should aim to travel separately to the work location and if not, comply with the travel to work requirements as within the SOP/SOG.

On arrival at the site, they should find out where the authorised hand washing locations are located and other special procedures being implemented by the site.

Before working on any machine, maintenance, installation or inspection personnel should follow the cleaning/sanitising advice described in section 3, including cleaning/sanitising panel access handles, latches, support struts etc. where they are to work.

Where harnesses are being used for working at height e.g. by installation staff, they should be restricted to one wearer – one harness.

Gloves would normally be worn by maintenance staff but should be regularly checked to ensure that they are in a sound condition and are regularly replaced.



Tools should ideally not be shared, even with other maintenance staff unless unavoidable and if this is the case, then they need to be considered as a touch points and regular cleaning procedures followed.

Workers carrying out installation activities e.g. fitting jibs to cranes may require co-workers to be within 2 metres of each other to carry out the activity. The hierarchy in the SOP/SOG needs to be followed and where the risk assessment requires additional PPE for risk mitigation such as face coverings to minimise the risk of virus transmission, then consideration must be given so that the wearing of any required PPE does not compromise the workers visibility, dexterity etc. to work safely and allow the PPE to remain fully functional.

On completion of maintenance or inspection activities, tools, equipment should be cleaned/sanitised before being returned to storage with hands washed or sanitised before the vehicle is entered. Touch points on the machine or equipment, particularly in the cab/platform should either be cleaned or the user informed that cleaning needs to be undertaken before the machine is put into use.

### **9. Loader/securer Operations**

Clean/sanitising procedures as described in section 3 should be undertaken by drivers to their vehicle prior to leaving the depot. If delivering a machine or equipment, the cab/platform or touch points of the equipment need to be cleaned/sanitised as well.

If additional workers are required to assist with the loading/unloading activity, they should aim to travel in separate vehicles. On arrival at the site, drivers may be asked to stay in their vehicle unless they need to be involved in the loading or unloading. If so, they should find out where the authorised hand washing locations are located and other special procedures being implemented by the site.

Before loading, a repeat undertaking of the cleaning/sanitising procedures should be done on each machine or equipment to be loaded. Gloves should be worn whilst handling the vehicle body or trailer, securing equipment and any materials being used for loading/unloading but removed prior to entering the cab.

During loading/unloading activities, other workers should not enter the vehicle cab or handle any of the securing equipment unless part of the operation.

On completion of loading or unloading activities, touch points on any machine or equipment, being delivered should either be cleaned or the user informed that cleaning needs to be undertaken before the machine is put into use. Finally, personal cleaning/sanitising procedures should be followed before the driver enters their vehicle.

### **10. Rescue Operations**

Difficult-to-reach cab/platforms such as tower cranes or MEWPs, or where plant is being installed or de-rigged or any form of high-risk activities mean that consideration needs to be taken in ensuring rescue operations can meet the requirements of the SOP/SOG. Where rescue workers need to wear PPE/RPE/face coverings etc., consideration should be given so that the wearing of any additional equipment does not compromise a rescue worker's ability to work safely and allow the equipment to remain fully functional.

Consideration must take be given to the limited availability of rescue team personnel and/or equipment, either the emergency services or dedicated response teams, With continual pressures on emergency service resources, the availability or timing of professional medical help may be compromised as outlined in the SOP/SOG.

Alternative methods of work or other equipment should be considered as a temporary alternative to reduce resultant issues arising from needing to carry out a rescue operation at height.



## 11. Documentation Handling

Documentation such as operator's manuals, delivery notes, tare sheets, risk assessments and method statements etc. should be dealt with as any touch point, as paper-based reading material is able to harbour COVID-19 for a certain length of time and should be subject to any normal touch point cleaning procedures. However, this may not be practicable for paper-based products.

Therefore, consideration should be given to eliminating the handling of paper-based documentation in lieu of using electronic platforms e.g. PDF-based files, and forwarded to a recipient's personal phone or tablet by extracting and sending either key pages or the complete document. Electronic platforms also allow the accessing and downloading of relevant data direct from suppliers or manufacturers website - for example, CPA technical publications such as technical information notices and safe use publications can be downloaded in the PDF format free of charge from the CPA website.

For the delivery and collection of plant and equipment, electronic or photographic methods of recording data and signatures should be considered, with a number of specialist platforms now on the market that allow digital-based signature collection.

Where electronic versions of documents are not available, specific pages or complete documentation should be printed off and passed to each recipient, preferably in a plastic wipeable folder, along with the instructions not to share with others. Where communal manuals, such as workshop manuals, or other documentation need to be shared, they should be viewed as potentially contaminated, with each user sanitising relevant parts of the document as is practicable and/or using gloves to handle the document.

Generic information, risk assessments, work instructions etc. can be posted on temporary or permanent notice boards to minimise handling by others.

Where a paper-based operator's manual or instructions accompanies, or is fixed within, a machine to be hired out, then these need to be included within the on-hire and off-hire touch points cleaning regime.

## 12. Sources of Information

Sector-specific guidance on social distancing in the workplace:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/construction-and-other-outdoor-work>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/factories-plants-and-warehouses>

<http://cicvforum.co.uk/downloads/>

Guidance of non-medical cleaning and disinfection:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-decontamination-in-non-healthcare-settings> and  
<https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/a-to-z-of-topics/covid-19/>

Health and Safety Executive Guidance

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/coronavirus.htm#>

*NOTE: Whilst every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the material contained within this publication, no liability is accepted by the Construction Plant-hire Association and the Scottish Plant Owners Association in respect of the information given.*